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University of Cape Coast

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

**WOMEN AND INHERITANCE: A READING OF NUMBERS 27:1-11;
36 & JOSHUA 17:1-6 FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF GENDER
ADVOCACY**

BY

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Doctor of Philosophy.**

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DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original work and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this University or elsewhere.

Name:

Signature:..... Date:.....

Supervisors' Declaration

We hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by the university of Cape Coast.

Principal Supervisor's Name:

Signature: Date:.....

Co-Supervisor's Name:

Signature: Date:.....

ABSTRACT

The narratives on the daughters of Zelophehad (Numbers 27:1-11; 36:1-13 & Joshua 17:1-6) have been widely read by literary and feminist critics. Feminists have hailed the daughters for their courage [Sakenfeld, 1995; Claassens, 2013] whilst Post –Colonial critics have criticised them for partaking in the imperialist role of taking the land of the Canaanites [Mbuwayesango, 2003]. Through these varied meanings on the same text, we can conclude that the hermeneutical approach to a text has an influence on the meanings that can be drawn from the text. Yet scholars seem to overlook the role that the steps/strategy the daughters adopted had on the results they achieved. Thus, I set out to read the narratives on the daughters from the perspective of gender advocacy. In doing so, I used reader-response criticism which proposes that meaning is inherent within the reader and the text. The study established that the daughters of Zelophehad used a strategy that enabled them break the boundaries of patriarchy to attain their land (economic freedom). They, therefore, did not merely achieve success but also established a blue print which can be adopted and used by individuals and groups experiencing some form of religious, cultural and economic discrimination. Consequently, the study suggests that when the strategy that the daughters used was adopted to the Ghanaian context, some reforms can be attained to change cultural practices that negatively affect women.

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DEDICATION

To my husband and children

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EATWOT	Ecumenical Association of Third World Theology
BDB	Enhance Brown-Driver Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon
CICOL	Civil Societies on Land
CIRCLE	Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians
FIDA	Federation of International Women Lawyers
GHL	Gesenius Hebrew Grammar
HAL	The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon
NETRIGHT	Network for Women Rights in Ghana
OXFAM	Oxford Committee for Famine
VSO	Voluntary Services Overseas
WiLDAF	Women in Law and Development in Africa

CHAPTER ONE

LAND AND WOMEN'S RIGHT TO INHERITANCE

Introduction

The main assumption of this thesis is that customary laws and societal regulations in Africa and Ghana in particular, work to deny women access and control of land and other resources in the community. Hence, from the perspective of gender advocacy, the research portrays the efforts of five women who came to own land in a patriarchal culture. The study, therefore, establishes that with a deliberate, systematic strategy, women and people who suffer from unfair policies and laws can adopt similar strategy by the daughters of Zelophehad to change their circumstance. This chapter presents the introductory aspects of the study. It gives the background to the study, the statement of the problem, objectives of the study, significance of the study, review of related literature, methodology and finally, the organisation of the thesis.

Background of the Study

There are various ways by which society ensures continuity from one generation to the other. The birth of children signifies the continuity in life likewise the transfer of property, culture and religious practices onto the next generation. Inheritance, thus, comes in as one of the fundamental ways by which wealth is transferred within the society to ensure the continuity of a lineage or a society. It is an important transition in life where one generation pass on for another generation to begin. Goody (1962) cites Cole (1932) who

defines inheritance: “as the entry of living persons into the possessions of dead persons” (p.311). He, however, explains that the transfer of rights does not only happen after the death of the individual but can even take place while the holder is still alive. Inheritance can also be explained as the passing on of properties, titles, debts, rights and responsibilities upon the death of an individual. In law, an heir is a person entitled to receive a share of the descendant’s property, subject to the rules of inheritance in that jurisdiction. Hence, it is not only wealth or properties that can be inherited but debts and responsibilities as well.

Sociologists (Wright & Randall, 1978) and Anthropologists (Goody, 1962; Rattray, 1955) who have researched extensively into this subject cite two major types of inheritance: the patrilineal and matrilineal systems of inheritance. Studies show that, in the patrilineal system of inheritance, family lineage is traced through the sons and, where daughters are considered, it is viewed as more of a privilege and not a right (Fenrich & Higgins, 2001; Scholz & Gomez, 2004). On the other hand, the matrilineal system of inheritance ensures that family property is transferred through the female line; meaning only the sisters’ sons and daughters can inherit and not their brothers’ children. It has been argued, therefore, that: “...for people of matrilineal descent a man’s own children and wife cannot inherit from him and his brothers and sisters are first in line of inheritance before his nieces and nephews” (Awusabo-Asare, 1990, p. 79).

The matrilineal system assumes the posture that a man’s children are not members of his family but rather that of their mothers. One then asks what happens if the woman or the mother of these children is also from a patrilineal

system of inheritance? It will eventually mean that, the children from such a union cannot inherit from either parent. Subsequently, in the matrilineal system of inheritance, it is assumed that women control the affairs of the lineage; hence, can inherit family property. In spite of this, it is rather the males who control the affairs and take major decisions on behalf of the women in the lineage. This is because “...chiefs and tribal leaders in matrilineal tribes are almost always males” (Kutsoati, & Morck, 2011, p. 7). This means that, those who take final decisions on the size of land to inherit and control over family land in even the matrilineal society is controlled by men. Thus, it points to the lack of control of women over land that they have inherited. Therefore, irrespective of the system of inheritance, leadership roles and control over family land is mostly in the hands of males, and this does not favour women in primitive societies; of which ancient Israel and Ghana are examples.

Roland de Vaux (1965) posits that ancient Israel, like any patrilineal society, traced their inheritance through male, especially, sons. Even among the sons, the eldest son had the privileged position to inherit majority of the family property. This law did not recognise daughters as also having a right to inherit their father even though they were also children of the man. Daughters, on the other hand are not considered as heirs. Again, even in situations where there were no male heirs, the brothers of the deceased were chosen and not his daughters. This situation persisted in ancient Israel until five women stood up and called attention to the injustice in the inheritance law. Numbers 27: 1-11; 36 and Joshua 17:1-7 tell the story of how five sisters came together to challenge an unfair customary law. Until their request, the laws were silent on how a man without a male son could maintain his name and prevent his

inheritance from being given to his brother. Daughters of a man without a son were not considered worthy to carry the name of their father. The action of the five sisters resulted in daughters being considered as people who stood in line to inherit land from their father in the absence of a male heir. Though Sakenfeld (1988) has argued that the action taken by the daughters of Zelophehad in Numbers 27:1-11 can be likened to a great scheme by men to solve a nagging male headache, hence, had nothing to do with women's desire for land and independence, their inclusion in those eligible to inherit cannot be overlooked (Sakenfeld, 1988; Mbuwayesango, 2014).

Inheritance in Africa has, over the years, gained attention as a public issue. This is because inheritance has been pointed out as part of the larger societal issues that discriminate against women. It has been generally argued that when women are allowed to own land it results in improved welfare, productivity, equality and empowerment for these women (Whitehead & Tsikata, 2003). It also builds their confidence to engage in productive ventures which transform their home and their community.

Land, which happens to be central in the issue between the daughters of Zelophehad's desire, on one hand and the problem of males without heirs, on the other hand, continues to be an important asset in our contemporary world. Today, women continue to struggle and face a lot of limitations in their pursuit for access to and control of land. Some of the common challenges they face are "...discriminatory laws and policies, patriarchal customs, traditions and attitudes" (<http://www.unhabitat.org/tenure>, p.3) which continue to deny women their rights in our contemporary world. Nevertheless, the fight for women's access and control of land in Ghana has greatly improved over the

years. This is due to the introduction of the PNDC Law 111 in 1992 and the spousal Act in Ghana which ensures that women have equal rights as their male counterparts to inherit family property.

However, the pluralistic nature of the Ghanaian constitution permits the customary laws to regulate most of the lands and land tenure system in Ghana. These customary laws sometimes work to alienate women, especially, the uneducated ones from inheriting lands that they are entitled to. This is very evident in reports and surveys conducted by scholars, gender advocates and NGOs (Non Governmental Organizations) that mostly support women in the rural areas in their fight to gain or maintain control over land. Survey reports by these groups continue to point to the fact that application of the law has yet to fully take root in Ghana, mainly because of the dearth of information, lack of access and the rigidity of the traditional rules and practices (Fenrich & Higgins, 2001; Scholz & Gomez, 2004). It is evident from these reports that women's access and control of family land is limited irrespective of the system of inheritance which the community or clan proffers.

Fenrich and Higgins (2001) posit that, even though women in Ghana cultivate forty percent of land, they still have less control over the land as farm managers or owners. They further argue that the land cultivated by women is not even half of what is cultivated by their male counterparts. This is greatly influenced by the power males have in the distribution of land and the perception that women are mostly not strong enough to control vast lands (Fenrich & Higgins, 2001).

A publication by the Daily Graphic on the 26th of March, 2014 which had the caption, "*Women's right to land: what every woman must know*",

points to the problems women face with regard to inheritance in spite of the existence of the Interstate Succession Law. The article posits that there are legal and regulatory systems in place that are designed to provide women's access to land rights but, in practice, they do not cater for the vulnerable. This is due to the fact that most rural women and those who find themselves in such situations do not have adequate knowledge about their rights. Therefore, it is only through advocacy or the efforts of advocates that most of these women will get to know of their rights to inherit their husbands and fathers.

Advocacy then becomes a tool that can be used to help women in their quest to access and control family land. Advocacy has been described as “a systematic, deliberate and organised way of getting policies and issues changed or reformulated to improve the living conditions of the poor, weak and deprived in the society” (Poudel & Luintel, 2003, p.59). It can also include a campaign to attain equality for all humans, especially women, and in this case, women's access to land. Since women are often in a disadvantaged position, gender advocacy focuses on empowering them vis- à -vis their male counterparts. A World Bank Training Module (2003) also explains advocacy as being about influencing or changing relationships of power. It can involve:

1. Representation: speaking on behalf of the voiceless
2. Mobilisation: encouraging others to speak with you
3. Empowerment: supporting the voiceless to speak for themselves

Based on the discussions of advocacy above, I take it to mean ways individuals or groups organise and campaign to change discriminatory policies/decisions concerning their livelihood. Gender advocacy is thus, a way women try to voice their displeasure concerning laws and issues that place

restrictions on their rights in the society and, in the process, ensure equity and justice between males and females.

Numbers 27:1-11; 36 and Joshua 17:1-6 also present a picture of five women who encourage themselves to voice their concern about a silent but oppressive law. The researcher, therefore, seeks to read Numbers 27:1-11; 36:1-13 and Joshua 17:1-6 in light of gender advocacy. The research therefore seeks to:

- a. conduct a survey into how Numbers 27:1-11; 36:1-13 and Joshua 17:16 have been read by scholars using various biblical methodologies with emphasis on feminist criticism to discuss the various issues drawn from the text.
- b. deduce what gender advocacy is vis-à-vis what the daughters of Zelophehad did. The study will deduce the strategies these women took in order to present their case and how they influenced the results they attained.
- c. to look at the reaction of Moses, God and the elders to the request made by these five women, and relate it to how people in authority react to gender advocacy.

Statement of the Problem

In spite of the success women have achieved over the years in the fight for access and control of land in Ghana, religion continues to be used as a tool to keep women from fighting for their rights when it comes to issues on inheritance. The question is; “how can the Bible which is used by Ghanaian Christians assist women in their fight for inheritance” in Ghana.

Most readings on Numbers 27:1-11; 36:1-13 and Joshua 17:1-6 ignore the steps the daughters of Zelophehad took to achieve their goal and rather emphasise their achievements and courage. But, I believe that there is a relationship between the approach and process adopted by the daughters' vis-à-vis the results they obtained. The study, therefore, seeks to read Numbers 27:1-11; 36:1-13 & Joshua 17:1-6 from a perspective that emphasise the processes or steps taken by an advocacy group and the success attained. Though Sakenfeld (1988), in her reading, referred to the place and time of the requests made, she did not relate how such elements might have influenced the outcome of the request and or relate how the whole process relates to gender advocacy. The outcomes of Sakenfeld's readings mean that a reading that focuses on the timing and setting of the daughters' request vis-à-vis that which was made by the elders will throw new light on why the daughters' request is an example of gender advocacy.

The question then is, what new meanings will be generated when the narratives on the daughters of Zelophehad are read from the perspective of gender advocacy? How will the meanings generated from this approach help Ghanaian women who read the narratives on the daughters of Zelophehad approach issues relating to inheritance of land?

Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study is to deduce the steps used by the daughters of Zelophehad to overcome a discriminatory law to gain land and how this strategy can help women in contemporary Ghana in their fight for land. This purpose will be achieved through the following objectives:

1. Examine the relationship between gender advocacy and the request made by the daughters of Zelophehad.
2. Analyze the reaction of Moses and the elders to the request made by the daughters of Zelophehad vis-à-vis people in authority and their reaction to gender advocacy.
3. Assess approaches used by women in their fight for land and inheritance
4. Deduce the role religion plays in women's fight for land in Ghana

Research Questions

These are the questions that guide the study:

1. What is the relationship between gender advocacy and the strategy used by the daughters of Zelophehad?
2. What is the reaction of Moses, elders and God to the daughters' request for land?
3. What are the similarities and differences between the response of males in authority today to request made by gender advocates in relation to the response by Moses, the elders and God?
4. What is the role of the church in the fight of women for land in Ghana?

Significance of the Study

The issues relating to inheritance by women remain an important aspect of society. It is through inheritance that most women can have access to land which can be translated into economic freedom (Kuenyehia, 2006). Accordingly, anything that impedes women's access to land directly affects their progress towards attaining economic independence for themselves and, later, their families. Thus, a study that focuses on how women in a patriarchal

society are able to overcome cultural and religious boundaries in order to attain land is commendable.

Subsequently, the study will offer insights to people experiencing any form of societal violation, and suggest steps that they can adapt to help change their situation. Based on the narratives on the daughters of Zelophehad, such people will be encouraged to gather strength and fight the discriminatory practice.

Moreover, a study that looks at a text from the perspective of gender advocacy will also contribute to the current studies in feminist critical readings in Ghana and Africa. The study will offer insight on the need to look at how this perspective can generate new insights in some overly read biblical texts.

The study will also draw attention to the need for citizens, especially women, to gain proper knowledge in the judicial and customary laws. This knowledge can help women succeed in their fight for land in Ghana.

Literature Review

This section deals with scholarly articles, books and journals that have been written on the study area. The researcher critiques these works which further highlights the research topic and problem for the study. But the review of important materials for the research does not end here as it continues throughout the work. This section is divided into seven and they are:

- a. Land in ancient Israel
- b. Land in Ghana
- c. Women's rights to land in ancient Israel
- d. Women's rights to land in Ghana
- e. Gender Advocacy

- f. Various readings on Numbers 27:1-11; 36:1-13 & Joshua 17:1-6
- g. Methodology

Land in ancient Israel

Land in this study refers to customary land. Thus, land is the property of the clan and can only be gained through inheritance and not through sale or charity.

In Leviticus 25:23, God is presented as the owner of all the land of Israel. The Israelites were just aliens and strangers on the land. Walter Brueggemann (2002) describes land as the central theme of biblical faith. He describes Israel as a landless people whose whole history and life depend on their hope for and response to the promise of land. It is thus, important to understand land as a space with God. Land is to be viewed as a gift and an inheritance from Yahweh. It is to be maintained and passed on from generation to generation.

The idea that God owns the land has not only theological significance but real sociological meaning as well. Land, in ancient Israel, was not viewed as an individual's property but rather as an inheritance of the entire community. It was a trust or "loan" administered by Israel on behalf of Yahweh. Land was the inheritance of the tribe. The tribe, therefore, allotted the land according to families. Hence, a plot or "portion" that each family received was their tribal inheritance. Each family protected and enjoyed lasting rights to use the land, but never as a commodity that could be bought and sold for private gain. The leaders of the tribe managed the land on behalf of the entire tribe.

Thus, the encounter between Naboth and King Ahab in 1 Kings 21 portrays ancient Israel's belief about land. Since it is mostly argued that land belongs to God, the king who was viewed as God or representative of God among the people felt entitled to own and use land that did not belong to his family. Hence, Naboth's opposition to the King was considered as a challenge to his power as king and representative of God by Ahab and his wife.

Consequently, the conflict in this role was what culminated in the encounter between King Ahab and Naboth which resulted in the death of Naboth. The king saw himself as representative of God and so felt entitled to the land whilst Naboth felt he had the responsibility to hold on to his family inheritance. This was because land was not to be sold but rather kept in the family and transferred through inheritance.

Further, cultic practices like the offering of first fruits to God and other festivals also give the idea that God is the owner and giver of land. Hence, land in ancient Israel was a gift from their God and was, therefore, handled with that idea in mind. Brueggemann (2002) explains that there is a direct relationship between land possession and obedience to the Torah. Similarly, Mbuwayesango (2004) affirms that:

Two important criteria defined Israel's understanding of itself as a people: religion and land. It was basically through religion that they had obtained their land. Their God, YHWH, had given it to them. Their continual possession of the land depended on their religious faithfulness and purity (p. 69).

Hence, ancient Israel believed that they lost their land anytime they went contrary to what the Torah demanded. Consequently there is "a

relationship between God, land, Israel and Torah/covenant” (Volschenk, 2001, p.180). God is the owner of all the land and has the free will to give the land to his obedient servants or not:

To conclude, ancient Israel viewed land as a gift and inheritance given to them and, thus, any activity on the land was based on approval from Yahweh. It is not only that but their very identity as a people, their political life, religious faith and economic life were all joined to their relationship with the land of Canaan (Mbuwayesango, 2004). This relationship is all tied together in a shape of a triangle; God on top and the bottom shared between the people of Israel and the land (Brueggemann, 2002). Therefore, God owned both Israel and land and gifted them with land as a result of their relationship with him.

In addition, ownership of land in an agrarian culture like Israel signified wealth and close relationship with God (the owner of land). This explains why Moses had to consult God over the daughters’ request for their father’s inheritance.

Land in Ghana

The concept of land in Ghana, with specific reference to the Akan ethnic group, is not very different from ancient Israel’s beliefs concerning land ownership. The Akan ethnic group is made up of the Ashanti, Akyem, Akuapems, Akwamu, Fante, Denkyira, Aowin, the Ahafo and many others who mostly occupy the southern part of the country. Scholars such as Rattary (1955) and Mbiti (1969) have argued that issues pertaining to land in most

tribes in Africa are linked to their belief in gods and ancestors. This belief therefore affects how land is handled among families.

The issue of land, among Akans, cannot be discussed without religion or the belief in the Earth goddess (Rattary, 1955; Mbiti, 1969). Thus, the Ashantis who are Akans “... regard the Sky and the Earth as their two great Deities” (Rattary, 1955, p. 214). Land, therefore, among the Akan, cannot be looked at in isolation to their belief in Earth as a deity who needs to be consulted before it can be used.

Consequently, farmers, builders and other people who use lands in Ghana most often offer libation to the Earth goddess before using it. Failure to do this will result in the failure of that venture, according to the belief of the Akans. Before farming commences on any land, most Akans will offer sacrifices in the form of *etɔ* (mashed yam or plantain), fowl and sheep. Farmers use this ritual to seek permission from the Earth deity and also secure her help to achieve bumper harvest. Likewise, sacrifices are also offered to the Earth goddess before crops are harvested.

In most communities, sacred days are set aside during the week to prevent farmers from working on their farms. Among the Ashantis, it is Thursday which is set aside to worship the Earth goddess; it also explains why the Earth goddess is called *Asaase Yaa* which literally means “Earth Thursday”. This belief is based on their belief that the land belongs to the gods and ancestors. The rituals ensure that there is a cordial relationship between the landowner and land user.

Mbiti (1969) posits that Africans are tied to the land because it provides them with the roots of their very existence and even binds them mystically to their

departed. This is because the ancestors are believed to be the real owners of the land and, therefore, maintain a sharp interest in the usage and preservation of it (Rattary, 1955). Consequently, it is difficult, if not impossible, for an Ashanti and or an Akan to part with their land. Shorter (1973) joins the argument to explain that Africans could not buy or sell or be alienated from land. Mbiti (1969) adds that to remove Africans from their land is considered as a great injustice. Hence, land in any agrarian culture is a valuable asset that is handled with so much caution since loss of it can plunge the family into poverty (Mbiti, 1969).

Based on the discussion above, one can deduce that land in ancient Israel and among the Akan of Ghana, is closely related to the belief system of these societies. And any mishandling of it affects their relationship with their God. Religion can never be separated from issues concerning ownership of customary land in the country.

However, the issue of conflict between traditional leaders who have been given the mandate to manage stool and customary lands of their communities in trust of the people and the family heads who are the leaders of the various families over how land should be leased or sold today resemble the incidence between Naboth and King Ahab. Thus in spite of time gap, land remain central to both Ghanaians and the Israelites, and misunderstandings between the limitations and power of family heads and chiefs over family lands persist even today (Hughes, A. K., Knox, A. & Jones C. K., 2011).

Women's rights to land in Ancient Israel

Exum (2007) argues that the Bible is about men. Therefore, it appears the biblical writers were not particularly interested in the experiences of

women. This explains why it is difficult to create portraits of women in ancient Israel. Exum (2007) further explains that women mostly appear in the biblical narratives in a subordinate position to that of men except with some extraordinary women like Deborah and the daughters of Zelophehad who were given some recognition in the male world.

Roland de Vaux (1965), in relation to inheritance, explains that women, especially, daughters have no right to the property of their father and, accordingly, land is mostly shared among brothers with the eldest taking the greater share. Ancient Israel, being a patrilineal state, places greater rights in the hand of men more than women. Women are, therefore, viewed as part of “the man’s property” (p. 39). Consequently a daughter is controlled by the father and brothers until she is given into marriage, an idea that is supported by most feminist scholars. After marriage, she becomes the property of her husband and his family and may later be returned to his father if the husband dies or divorces her.

Technically, a woman is never allowed to take decisions for herself because at every stage in her life she is overshadowed by a male figure (Bellis, 1994). De Vaux paints a perfect picture of the situation when he states that the wife calls her husband ‘master’ or ‘lord’ which is the same way slaves call their masters. This designation “Lord” places the woman among the possessions of the man, an idea that is even supported in texts, such as Exodus 20:17. In spite of the description above the wife is never viewed as a slave; nonetheless, it also does not put her on the same pedestal as that of the husband. She also does not qualify to inherit the properties of her husband.

Wives cannot inherit the husband neither can daughters inherit their father because inheritance is the preserve of men.

Bird (1997), on the issue of the status of women in ancient Israel, opines that the Old Testament does not yield a specific portrait of women. The image of women as presented varies and so a common lifestyle cannot be assumed for the woman. As a result of the patrilineal nature of the ancient Israelite society, women are, to a greater extent, aliens or non-existent within their family. Though married women are given some recognition, it is basically in relation to their ability to give birth to sons (Bird, 1997; De Vaux, 1965; Mbuwayesango, 2003).

Bird clarifies that the ideal portrait of women in ancient Israel is that of a mother who has many sons and takes care of her husband and home. In spite of this, they still remained outsiders in their husbands' household and that of their sons. Daughters, on the other hand, are also prepared from birth to leave their father's house and give their allegiance to their husband's household. Thus, based on these, women, to a large extent, can be described as individuals who are meant to be seen and not heard.

Bird takes this further by arguing that, due to the patriarchal nature of the Israelite society, women are not ordinarily allowed to inherit land. She explains that exceptions like Numbers 27:1-11 treat daughters as placeholders in the absence of sons, holding on till male heirs could be gained. The lack of many female names in the genealogies of ancient Israel points to the position women often occupy in ancient Israel. This is because lineage is traced through males which, therefore, qualify them as heirs over women (Mbuwayesango, 2003).

This picture painted by scholars looks terrifying but it is not that bad. The biblical stories show that women did have some influence over their husbands but in a subtle manner (Bird, 1997). The patriarchal wives like Sarah and Rebecca were able to influence the choice of heirs to their husband's wealth.

Yet, one can still appreciate the difficult situation the five daughters of Zelophehad faced when they realised that their father's property and name may be lost and forgotten because he died without a son. They had nothing legally to do with inheritance according to the law but they still found a gap to make their voices heard. This shows that even in the midst of unfair policies and patriarchal customary laws, women can still find a way to voice their concerns. The way and manner this concern is tabled to achieve results is the focus of this thesis.

Women's right to land in Ghana

It must be stated from the onset that who has the right to inherit land in the Ghanaian customary setting has more to do with the lineage the individuals comes from. Kuenyehia (2006) posits:

In most parts of Africa, inheritance depends on whether one comes from a patrilineal or matrilineal family (religious customary law excluded). ... The right to succeed to and enjoy rights in property is determined by membership in the family, and such membership is traced through females from a founding female ancestor (matrilineal) or through males from a founding male ancestor (patrilineal) (p. 391).

Consequently, Fenrich and Higgins (2001) define the family in Ghana as individuals related by blood and not by marriage. This means that, in Ghana, a woman is never considered as part of the husband's family whether under

matrilineal or patrilineal system of inheritance (Coker-Appiah & Foster, 2002).

Fenrich and Higgins (2001) further emphasise that the Ghanaian family goes beyond the nuclear family and includes the extended family. Unlike the Western nations where spouses and children make up a family, spouses are not recognised as being part of the wife/husband's family. Coker-Appiah and Foster (2002) join the argument and point out that a woman can never inherit any property of the husband unless she is able to provide an heir in the form of sons in the patrilineal system of inheritance. However, in the matrilineal system of inheritance, such an opportunity is even lost to her since it is the nephews of the man who are mandated by the customary law to inherit him. This is because the woman is not part of her husband's family.

Fenrich and Higgins explain further that the extended family is the most important social institution in the country because it:

constitutes the pivot around which the political and socio-economic organisation of society revolves... It determines [one's] beneficial enjoyment of rights in land and other moveable property. It may also affect generally [one's] rights of succession to hereditary office in the hierarchy of political organisation within the traditional system (p. 270).

In view of the above, it is clear that one's ability to inherit land is highly influenced by extended family and the kind of family system which a person belongs to. In Ghana, every individual belongs to one of the two major family systems: patrilineal or matrilineal (Coker-Appiah & Foster, 2002; Kuenyehia, 2006).

The patrilineal system of inheritance places emphasis on one belonging to his father's family. Thus, this family is mostly made up of a man, his father, brothers, paternal aunts and uncles, his own children and his sisters. However, in this system, the sister's children are not a part of the family, but they rather belong to their father's family. Consequently, children from the sister's side cannot inherit their mother's family lands because they are not recognised by the tenets of this family system.

Communities that ascribe to the matrilineal system of inheritance also view children as belonging to their mother's family. The family is made up of the woman, her mother, brothers and sisters, her maternal aunts and uncles. The children of the brothers cannot inherit in this system of inheritance since they belong to their mother's family. The predominant group of people who ascribe to this system of inheritance are the Akans who are made up of the Ashantis, Akyems, Fantes, Akwamus and many others (Fenrich & Higgins, 2001).

However, it must be emphasised that, matrilineal is not matriarchal. Rattray (1955) posits that though the "clan descent is traced through the female, authority in the family lies mainly in the hands of the mother's brother, the maternal uncle (*wofa*)" (Rattray, 1955, p.77). The *wofa* (uncle or mother's brother) is the *Abusua panyin* (head of the family) who serves as the protector of the women and children in the family. "It is the *abusuapanyin* who takes custody of all *abusua asase* (family lands)" (Awuah-Nyamekye, 2012, p. 84). He holds the highest authority in the family and, subsequently, is the representative of the family on the council of elders in the chief's palace. This council adjudicates justice in the community. Gyekye (1998) argues that

the council is an all male group except for the queen mother who is a member of the council. It is therefore argued that, it is the men in the matrilineal family who occupy the stools and so eventually exercise greater control over the properties of the lineage which include land.

It can be concluded that irrespective of the type of family one belongs to, authority always resides in men who have the last say in all issues, especially matters relating to land and inheritance in the family. Even in matrilineal system of inheritance where women have the right to inherit family lands, final authority depends on the *wofa* who is male and not female. The *Abusuapanyin* (family head) in the two main types of inheritance is always male and never female. Women, therefore, do not have the final say in access and control of land under the customary laws in Ghana. Subsequently, the legal plurality (is the situation where two legal systems apply in the same social field, example; statutory laws, customary laws and religious laws) which the country practices, has bedevilled the law on inheritance with uncertainty and inequality (Kuenyehia, 2006).

Thus, irrespective of the interstate succession law, women in Ghana still encounter difficulties in inheriting land. This is because of the power customary laws have over individuals and, as the work identifies, ignorance of most women about the stipulations in this law. Due to this gap, women continue to suffer from discriminatory customary laws in spite of their active involvement in producing half of the food grown in the country (Fenrich & Higgins, 2001). Women do not exercise control in the family and, in most cases, are not aware of their rights. This gives room for gender advocacy which seeks to even the scale in the society by ensuring that both male and

female have equal access to the resources of the family. Thus, the next section will look at who an advocate is and what constitutes gender advocacy. This, the researcher believes, will help clarify the issues in Numbers 27:1-11; 36 and Joshua 17:1-6.

Gender Advocacy

The term advocacy has been variously defined by pressure groups, non-governmental organisations and advocates around the world. Poudel and Luintel (2003) define advocacy as;

An organised and sustained campaign to get the interest of the marginalised people represented and addressed in public policy, attitudes or practices. It is a deliberate, systematic and organised way of influencing effective implementation of existing policy, change it or formulate alternative policies in favour of targeted area/group. The goal of advocacy is to challenge the powerful in favour of the deprived and disadvantaged ones, such as Dalit, ethnic minorities, landless women, children and older people (2003, p. 59).

This definition implies that advocacy is a planned campaign to get those in authority to recognise an oppressive policy/law and, consequently, change it to identify the rights of those being affected by the policy/law. It also involves voicing ones concern over a problem in order to draw the attention of those in power to cause a change or transformation. Another definition, given by a World Bank Module (2003), sees advocacy as influencing or changing relationships.

Advocacy generally, is concerned with how those who are marginalised in the society by one issue or policy work to make their plight known to those with power to force a response out of them.

Gender advocacy places special emphasis on the equality between males and females. Thus, the focus of advocates is to influence policies in a way to bring about balanced (power) relations between both sexes. It also emphasises the need to empower women to be on equal terms with their male counterparts. Poudel and Luintel (2003) argue that there must be a clear appreciation of the political culture and context of the advocating group in order for advocacy to be successful. Thus, the agenda for the desired change should reflect the perspectives of the affected community. They posit that groups and individuals who seek to effect gender justice must have such perspectives clearly outlined in their agenda. These perspectives include “concrete objectives, attainable targets and clear strategies” (p. 61). This will go a long way to ensure that advocates do not lose focus in the course of the struggle.

The study, therefore, seeks to read Numbers 27: 1-11; 36 and Joshua 17:1-6 to identify the presence or otherwise of this outlined agenda and to evaluate whether it has an impact on the response the daughters received from those in authority. Gender emphasises equity between males and females while feminism seeks to empower women to end sexist oppression. In this case, because the text seeks to fight for recognition for women in cases of land inheritance, the use of gender in this paper is appropriate. The next section, therefore, looks at how scholars have used various approaches to read the narratives on the daughters of Zelophehad.

Various Readings on Numbers 27:1-11; 36 & Joshua 17:1-6

The story about the daughters of Zelophehad has been read by scholars, especially, feminist scholars who seek to highlight the life of women in the Hebrew Bible. This section of the review will look at the various methods that have been used by scholars to interpret Numbers 27 and 36 and Joshua 17:1-6. One scholar who has done extensive studies on the chosen passage is Katherine Doob Sakenfeld (1988). Sakenfeld (1988) used three different interpretive methods namely: literary reading, culturally cued reading and historical method to interpret Numbers 27 and 36, with the intention to describe the three broad areas in feminist biblical interpretation.

Sakenfeld (1988) calls the first interpretive method “a literary reading” (p. 187). She argues that this method takes the text as “a received text with interpretive constraints provided by the perceived literary design, and by grammatical and syntactical elements” (p. 187). She cites Phyllis Trible and Mieke Bal as people who mostly engage the Bible in such a manner.

Consequently, Sakenfeld applies the literary reading approach to Numbers 27:1-11 and 36 and makes the following interpretation. The five women in the narrative are depicted as weak, vulnerable and people with the least power. She explains that these five women showed so much courage by taking the first step to present their case to Moses, the priest, the leaders of the various tribes and the all male congregation. To her, the way the daughters presented their case forced Moses to look for a solution to their problem. Sakenfeld argues that the courage of these women was rewarded with a directive from God to Moses to heed to their request. The result is a great victory for women, especially, daughters in inheritance.

Her analysis of Numbers 36 focuses on the case of the elders from the clan of Zelophehad. To her, the way and manner the elders went about influencing God's response deserves much probing. She ends this literary reading by pointing out how the exciting experience turned sour after restrictions were placed on these women because of their earlier request. It is worth noting that the daughters are silent in chapter 36 and so everything is about Moses and the elders. In her article, she does not interpret Joshua 17:1-6 which is an extension of the narratives on the daughters of Zelophehad.

In the second interpretive method/approach, Sakenfeld (1988) posits that the major theme is the problem of males with no sons in the Israelite community. To her, chapter 27:1-11 places the concern of these males in the mouth of these women as in the form of a question, "Why should the name of our father be forgotten?" (p. 183). She calls this method "culturally cued reading" which reads the text as a product of its own culture. This second approach attempts at exposing the patriarchal structure and values underneath a narrative. Sakenfeld cites scholars such as Esther Fuch, T. Dora Setel and Renita Weems as people who mostly use this method. In this approach, the daughters did not initiate anything but they were rather made to do the job of the men. The daughters of Zelophehad were made to present the dilemma of men who died without leaving sons, especially, in relation to land and inheritance.

In spite of her view that the daughters were used as pawns in the whole incident, she still points to a possibility that they agreed to be used as pawns. She also argues that the story is about how a new case law came into being with its subsequent effect on women and inheritance in ancient Israel. With

chapter 36, she explains that the focus of the text is also about male concern in relation to the inheritance legislation, when viewed from the perspective of the economic interest of a tribe in an agrarian economy. Here, a woman who owns an arable land will have a lot of suitors since, upon marriage, her land will belong to the husband. Hence, the elders met Moses to protect their tribes land.

Sakenfeld ends the second interpretive approach by showing how culture influenced the reading. In this case, unlike the previous approach, it is a male need that was met and the daughters were not courageous but rather pawns that were used to meet a male need. The culturally cued reading emphasises the patriarchal background of the text by belittling the daughters' efforts to emphasise the solution to a male problem.

The third and final approach highlights the works by scholars whose main interest is the history behind the text. This approach, she argues, conducts a historical deconstruction of the text. It uses data from other ancient Near Eastern nations which throw more light on the conditions of women during that period. Major proponents of this approach are Tikvia Frymer Kensky, Phylis Bird and Carol Meyers.

She goes on to interpret the text from the historical approach. She explains that, most 'mainline' scholars place these passages between the exilic and postexilic period. She further explains that the status of women in the Judean culture of the post exilic period were good, hence, the daughters' ability to gain access to male authority in the community. However, women were always under authority, so this request makes it a remarkable feat.

Sakenfeld's work points to the three major interpretive approaches mostly used by feminist biblical scholars. She raises an important issue that this research seeks to examine in detail. That is, the polysensuous nature of interpreting a text. Her work shows that, even under the broad name of feminism, there are various ways with which each group of feminist scholars go about interpreting the text. Sakenfeld agrees that these three approaches are not conclusive but could be further developed. Again, it can be deduced from her work that the kind of method/approach chosen by a researcher can have an influence on the meaning that will come out of the reading. This is reassuring since the researcher is convinced that a new approach will offer fresh eyes to read this text with the hope of drawing new and exciting meaning. Hence, the rest of this section will analyse how other scholars have used different approaches to read the text on the daughters of Zelophehad. The aim of this survey, as stated earlier, is to emphasise the role method and perspectives play in the meaning that is drawn from a text.

Claassens (2013) also read the narratives on daughters of Zelophehad from the concept of human dignity. She read the text trying to harmonise the outcomes of reading the narratives on the daughters of Zelophehad (Numbers 27:1-11; 36 and Joshua 17:1-6) from the gender and post colonial perspectives. She set out to read the text with the concept of human dignity in mind. Claassens, right from the onset, admits that reading the narrative about the daughters of Zelophehad from two contesting points of view presents some problems. She explains that a gendered reading praises these women as heroes and points out their courage in challenging the highest authorities (Claassens, 2013).

On the other hand, a postcolonial reading, as argued by Dora Mbuwayesango, includes these five women by their request for land, in the imperialist role that ancient Israel played in displacing the Canaanites from their land. In this light, Claassens cites Musa Dube who draws a distinction between women who are part of the colonisers and those who are colonised. She also cites Dora Mbuwayesango who has this to say about these five women:

Israelite women are part and parcel of the Israelite imperial culture. As represented by the daughters of Zelophehad, one might say Israelite women in the Numbers narrative are looking for ways to share in the benefits of the dispossession of the Canaanites while Canaanite women (and men) must fight for survival (Claassens, 2013, p.327).

She argues that these conflicting readings pose problems for an interpreter who decides to read the text from both the gender and postcolonial perspective. This is because the gender approach praises the effort of the daughters while the postcolonial approach condemns the daughters for being part of those who dispossess others of their land. Claassens argues that her interest was not to compare the two approaches but find out how the best intent of each group can be addressed.

In order to achieve her goal, she suggests that both groups must recognize the experiences and suffering of the other group. Claassens (2013) explains that:

The divergent positions held by gendered and postcolonial interpretations regarding this story demonstrate the blind spots that people quite often exhibit; being focused so much on their own group

and their own pain means that they have trouble placing themselves in somebody else's shoes (p. 333)

As away to emphasise her point, she cites Martha Nussbaum (2001) who describes three conditions that need to be present in order for one group to truly show solidarity with another suffering group.

The first is for the group to understand that the suffering group's condition is very serious and awful. Thus, in relation to the request for land by the five sisters; their request displaces another marginalized group. On the other hand, the Canaanites must also recognise that the Israelite women made their request based on their own perilous position in a patriarchal world. The second is for each group to accept that the condition of the other is undeserved, thus, the Canaanites did not deserve the plight of having their land taken from them. And the last condition Nussbaum raises is for each group to recognize their common defencelessness that will enable them see the similarities between their own situation and that of others.

Claassens in applying this to the daughters' narrative argues that it may be possible to find a common ground in the silencing of the five women in chapter 36 and the silencing of the Canaanites discerned by postcolonial interpretation. She explains that the desire for land can be a common issue between these two groups. Claassens further posits that the divergent positions represented by the daughters of Zelophehad and the landowners of the people are situations that can be found in some societies today. The theme of dignity and recognition that can be traced in the voice of the daughters can be found among people who have been marginalised in spite of their context. She ends by arguing that in situations of competing claims for justice, it is necessary for

us to understand that both sides yearn for the “opportunity to flourish” (p. 336).

Though Claassens attempts to merge two contrasting methodologies, it can be said that, in the end she was not successful. This means that each interpretation can be appreciated on its own without seeking to place them together.

However, her decision to read from the gendered and post colonial perspectives portrays the different meanings that one can get from the text when using a different approach. She conducts her study in the light of human dignity which is a major issue for women in patriarchal societies today. Claassens argues that the meaning of the narratives on the daughters of Zelophehad changes depending on the interpretive approach that is adopted by the researcher.

Subsequently, in reviewing the works on the daughters of Zelophehad, I noticed that the women chose a particular place and timing for their request which makes it significant for women in advocacy today. Though Sakenfeld briefly mentions it in her work Claassens on the other hand ignores it, I believe it is worth a comprehensive study. Two unique scenes and timing are presented in the narrative for the same request by two groups of people. The first request was by the daughters and the second by the elders. The researcher is, therefore, interested in these scenes and timing, and how they influenced the outcome of each request. Consequently, I am convinced that, by reading the text from the perspective of a gender advocacy, the researcher will be able to focus on the role that the strategy adopted by the daughters and the elders had on their respective aim to attain/retain land (economic freedom). Based on

this assumption, the next section delves into the methodology that the researcher proposes to use in reading the chosen narrative.

Methodology

Reader-Response Criticism

Reader-response criticism serves as the framework for reading Numbers 27:1-11; 36 and Joshua 17:16 in this study. McKnight (1999) intimates: “reader-response criticism approaches biblical literature in terms of the values, attitude and response of readers” (p. 230). He further explains that “reader-oriented theories not only emphasize the reader’s role in the process of achieving meaning but see the result of reading in terms of an effect upon the reader” (p. 236). This method therefore, assumes that “it is in the reader that the text comes to life” (Iser, 1978, p.19). Subsequently, scholars such as Culler and Iser see reading as a process which emphasise the combination of the text and the imagination of the reader. Thus, the meaning of text is achieved when there is an interaction between the reader and the text (Keegan, 1985; Fowler, 2008). Fowler argues further that:

No longer can meaning be understood to be stable, determinate content that lies buried within text, waiting excavation. Rather meaning becomes a dynamic event in which we ourselves participate (p.161).

Hence, per Fowler’s argument, there cannot be a single meaning to a text and, therefore, anytime a reader interacts with the text, meaning can be drawn. Inductively, different readers have the potential to draw different meaning to a text. Thus due to the nature of the reading process the “reality of the experience of reading illuminates the dynamic nature of real experiences” (McKnight, 1999, p. 236). This is achieved when what Iser refers to as gaps

are left in the text for the reader to fill. “Gaps is a lack of complete continuity and or a lack of specification of relationships between the different linguistic and literary elements” (McKnight, 1999, p. 232). Hence, “gaps left in a text are filled by readers in different ways creating various meanings. The multiplicity of interpretations that come out as readers fill the gaps left in a text is not considered a problem but a boon” (Maxwell, 2017, p. 3).

Scholars of this method agree that there can be multiplicity of meanings since the reader assumes different posture when answering the clues that have been left in the text. Reading in this method, is a process, which involves the reader and the text. This is because it believes that the text is nothing, simply an object of ink and paper until some reader responds to the marks on the paper as verbal symbols (Rosenblatt, 1978). To her (Rosenblatt), each individual brings the background knowledge, beliefs, cultural values, cultural expectation and reading context to the act of reading. The reading event is a synergistic relationship between text and reader.

Stanley Fish (1982) on the other hand explains that the reader is not independent in her reading because the reader belongs to the ‘community of interpreters’. He writes that, each reader approaches a literary work not as an individual but part of a community of readers. To him “it is the interpretive communities, rather than either the text or reader, that produce meanings” (www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog.p).

He further argues that what renders a reader’s experience valuable is the community of interpreters she represents. Though Fish’s concept of interpretive community has been challenged and widely criticized, Fowler (2008) argues that: “both the reader and critic of the Bible have their reading

experience shaped by the communities of which they are members” (p. 53). Consequently, Fowler sums up Fish’s argument on the interpretive community when he admits that the experiences of the reader shape reading process. The reader of the Bible can always be classified into two broad categories, namely, the ordinary reader and the expert reader (2008). He explains that the expert reader is trained and informed while the average reader or the ordinary reader is anyone who reads the Bible for personal enrichment.

Fowler continues that, the reader however, assumes a certain responsibility during the reading process. One of the important roles is that of filling gaps that are left in the text to engage the reader; an idea that was proposed by Iser. Gaps can also be viewed as clues during the reading process; and these clues are provided to the reader on various levels of the text. These clues entice the reader into action and supply the missing information in order to make sense of what is said. In this way the text requires an input from the reader and makes the reader co-responsible for the reaction of the text as meaningful communication (Iser, 1978).

Further, scholars of this method agree that the reader, whether expert of ordinary; assumes a stance during the reading process. Fowler (1996) intimates that in most cases the reader is labelled either as an actual reader, implied reader, intended reader or informed reader based on the role the reader assumes during the reading process. The implied reader can also be referred to as the intended reader since he/she is the reader the author has in mind when the text is written. This reader is different from the actual reader on the basis that the actual reader’s context influences the meaning that is derived from the text. However, it is the clues left behind by the intended reader that helps

her/him in the interpretation. An advantage of reading as an actual reader is that it helps free the text from the confines of history, sociology and psychology. Though the reader can make reference to the history behind the text during the reading process; it is not the main focus of the reading. Thus the method allows the reader to interact with the text in light of her own context, linguistic and literary competence (McKnight, 1999).

However, one weakness of reading as an actual reader is that it ignores the intention of the author. Here the authorial intention is lost during interpretation. In spite of that reader-response continues to be associated with other methods such as structuralism, formalism and feminism (McKnight, 1999). In this aspect Fowler argues that the real or actual reader can assume the stance of a resistance reader which falls in line with the ideals of feminist criticism. Subsequently, the understanding of reader-response criticism as process demands that reading follow these basic steps:

Identification of genre; is the text a narrative or poetry. The identification of the genre enables the reader to choose the appropriate tools to use to conduct the reading. This is followed by establishing the structure of the text paying close attention to the pericope of the text. The next step explains the words, sentences and semantic presentation of the text. The reader must also define herself and the perspective within which she is approaching the text. This is because the perspectives of the reader will influence the reading process, thus the method demands for the reader to be defined. The reader in this case is reading from the perspective of gender-advocacy, with specific emphasis on daughters. Subsequently, the gender-advocate's task of liberating daughters from societal structures falls within the framework of liberationist

feminism. Hence the reader reads the text from the perspective of a feminist gender-advocate.

Finally the process demands the reader to construct the image of the characters in the text based on the role they perform in the narrative. All these steps together with certain roles adopted by the reader serve as the steps one can use when reading a text using the reader-response methodology.

Consequently, in this thesis, I will assume the role of a real flesh and blood reader (defined as real or actual reader by some scholars) who will follow the clues in the text to arrive at the meaning. Another responsibility involves looking back and forward during the reading process as posited by Fowler. He explains that such reading process involves looking back and forward, which affords the reader the opportunity to anticipate what lies ahead and also review or re-evaluate what have already been read. These analyses which occur during the reading process throw more light on the events as they unfold in the narrative.

The last activity that the reader can assume during the reading process is the “resisting reader”, a term Fowler borrows from Judith Fetterley. Fetterley (1986) as cited by Fowler argues that, a resisting reader could be a feminist critic who reads to resist the sexist undertones in the text. She explains that the orientation of women in culture cause them to think like men, identify the point of view of men and support a male system of values which main objective is to suppress women (Fowler, 2008). Consequently, the reading process will involve filling in of gaps, looking back and forward and finally resisting the sexist undertones in the text. All these will be done to ensure equity between males and female in ensuring each group achieve

economic independence. This, therefore, directs me to analyse what informs a feminist reading of a text.

Feminist Perspectives to Reading the Bible

According to Alice Ogden Bellis (1994), feminism has a long history which makes it difficult to be given one definition that would satisfy all feminists. There are so many branches within this enterprise; however, they have something that is common to most of them, that is; to break the gap that has been placed between males and females and put men and women on the same pedestal. Phyllis Trible (1984) defined feminism as, “a critique of culture of faith in light of misogyny as in feminism is a prophetic movement, examining the status quo, pronouncing judgment and calling for repentance” (p. 3).

Feminism, she explains, “questions the way in which things have been done with particular emphasis on patriarchy and how it has contributed in silencing issues about women” (p. 3). Bellis (1994) also defines feminism, broadly, as “a point of view from which women are understood to be fully human and, thus, entitled to equal rights and privileges” (p. 6). Therefore, in no sense can women be considered as subordinates or inferior to men. Based on the definitions above, it is clear that a feminist approach to a text will place the needs of women above that of men. It will also denounce the abuse of women by society, culture and religion that is inherent in the text.

Susan Brayford, sums up the argument above when she explains that feminism comes in many forms, each of which exposes varied ideas about the Bible, its authority, and its importance. To interpret the Bible from any feminist perspective calls for certain questions to be asked. They are:

What does the text say or not say about women? What do the characters male and female, human and divine say about women? Do these answers portray women as fully human [as Bellis definition above advocates] or as subordinate to men? If it is the latter (which is more common), what is the appropriate response? This last question is the one that distinguishes the various feminist approaches/ methods to biblical interpretation (https://www.sbl-site.org/assets/pdfs/TB7_FeministCriticism_SB.pdf).

Carolyn Osiek (1997) explains that, feminist scholars, in their bid to streamline the various methods used to approach biblical material on women, have divided it into four main parts. She cites Sakenfeld (1981) who summarizes the interpretive methods as follows:

1. Focus on texts that portray women in a positive way to counteract the devastating negative text against women.
2. Rejecting the Bible altogether as not authoritative and or useful
3. Looking more broadly to biblical texts that lend themselves to a liberation perspective
4. Taking a culturally comparative approach to analyse the intersection of the stories of ancient and modern women living in patriarchal culture.

Osiek (ibid), however, argues that a fifth one could be added which would rather focus on “the broader issues of inclusive biblical anthropology”

(p. 959). She goes further to posit that the five broad divisions could be merged into three, namely,

1. Focus on women (1 and 4)

2. Situate women within a broader context (3 and 5)
3. Give up on the Bible altogether as hopeless (2)

These approaches are not the rule but a standard that most feminist scholars use in their interpretation of the Bible. The thrust of the issue is that most feminist scholars when approaching any biblical text seek to take one of the above listed positions with the text. Thus, this work will fall within the first and second approaches that focus on women. Numbers 27:1-11; 36 and Joshua 17:1-6 constitute the narratives on the daughters of Zelophehad. These narratives lay emphasis on five women and the role they played to gain land (economic freedom).

After deciding on where your text belongs, the exegete then proceeds to read the text, but from what perspective? Osiek (1997), asks, how modern Christian women react towards the Bible after the role it played in supporting patriarchy to subjugate women and the vulnerable in the society? How can the work of gender advocates help us understand Numbers 27:1-11; 36 and Joshua 17:1-6? She argues that reactions towards a text in feminism can be divided into five. They are: rejectionist, loyalist, revisionist, sublimationist and liberationist feminism. Of these, I choose to read the text from the perspective of an African liberationist approach. Before describing this perspective, it appears reasonable that I describe the other perspectives and give reasons regarding my choice of the African liberationist approach.

First, the rejectionist is a familiar alternative. It resembles Sakenfeld's second method, rejecting the Bible as not authoritative or useful. Osiek (1997) postulates that some rejectionists go to the extent of rejecting the Bible including the whole religious tradition it represents. Bellis (1994) describes

these rejectionists as those who find no “way of resolving the tension between feminism and the Bible. For them, the Bible is irremediably androcentric and irredeemably sexist” (p. 17). She mentions Mary Daly as a leading example among this group. The stance of the rejectionist is extreme and cannot help the researcher in understanding the context that informed the daughters questioning the existing law. This is because the proponents of this model argue for a total rejection of the Bible. It is, therefore, very limited and does not have much connection with the past.

The second form is the loyalist hermeneutics which seeks to accept the traditional argument for order through hierarchy. Thus, it is argued that the subordination theme applies only or chiefly to the family, not to society at large, and is totally misunderstood and abused when seen as dominance or submission. Rather, the point is the necessary leadership of one and followership of the other as the only and divinely intended way to unity and harmony in society. Far from diminishing the dignity and freedom of women, such a structure promotes the true liberation of both women and men to fulfil their divinely intended destiny. This approach does not question instances of patriarchal abuse on women but rather shows little interest in confronting current realities. It also sees the subordination of women as divine which the liberationist interpretive method rejects.

This model would also not be used by the researcher because it rather promotes the subordination of women as a way of promoting harmony in the society, a perspective I do not agree with. The research seeks to present how women can encourage and educate themselves to challenge and change unfair

policies in the society. Docile subordination of customary laws even the oppressive ones work against the desire of women to gain economic freedom.

If the rejectionist hermeneutist holds the biblical tradition as unconvertible and the loyalist hermeneutist holds it as not in need of conversion, the third alternative, a revisionist hermeneutic, represents a midpoint between the two. The foundational premise of this hermeneutics is that the patriarchal mode in which the Judeo-Christian tradition has been cast is historically but not theologically determined. Because of social and historical factors, the tradition has been male-dominated, androcentric, and discriminatory, but these characteristics are separable and thus, not intrinsic to it. The tradition is capable of being reformed, the perspectives too can be revised and that is precisely the religious challenge addressed to the contemporary feminist (Osiek 1997). This method enables one to research into women's history to reveal neglected sources of information in the tradition. This approach merges Sakenfeld's (1) and (4). Historical sources are re-examined and reinterpreted to show how much we know about women and, most importantly, uncover their contribution to the history of their people (Osiek, 1997). Works of scholars like Phyllis Trible can be placed in this model.

The fourth one is the sublimationist hermeneutic with its basic premise being the otherness of the feminine as manifested especially in feminine imagery and symbolism in human culture. Osiek (1997) indicates that, the feminine is innately superior to the masculine, and, therefore, any thought of equality or egalitarianism is unthinkable. In other versions, the two poles are so different that no comparisons can be made, and social equality is simply a

non-issue. The life giving and nurturing qualities of woman are of a totally different order than the initiative and constructive qualities of man, and any substantial crossing over in sex roles is against nature. In biblical studies, the sublimationist hermeneutic takes the form of the search for and glorification of the eternal feminine in biblical symbolism which is not the interest of this research. This model is very limited as a tool to cause real transformation of gender roles which this work seeks to do.

The fifth one is the liberationist feminism pioneered earlier by Letty Russell, Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza and Rosemary Radford Ruether. It takes its starting point from the broader perspective of liberation theology. Its basic premise is a radical reinterpretation of biblical eschatology. The reign of God with its redemption is proclaimed as the task and mission of the believer. Liberationist feminism proclaims that the central message of the Bible is human liberation, and that this is, in fact, the meaning of salvation. It, therefore, attempts to 'come clean' with bold honesty on the question of exegesis and advocacy.

Rather than try to maintain that, biblical interpretation can be done objectively and in a value-free framework as the historical-critical school and structuralism would claim, liberationist biblical theologians openly admit that theirs is an advocacy theology, already committed to certain causes and assumptions before it begins - as are, in fact, any of the other four hermeneutical alternatives... (Osiek, 1997, p. 965).

Scholars whose work can be placed within the boundaries of liberation are Musa Dube(2009), Dora Mbuwayesango(2014) and many African scholars. Works by Renita Weems, Gerald West (2000) and Madipoane

Masenya (1995) can all be placed within this context. Even though scholars like Tribble (1978) who belong to the revisionist approach have argued that “abstracting liberation themes from texts can even be dishonest..., it often ignores the particularities of the text” (Brayford, 2009, p. 316). Brayford also criticises this approach with the others with the exception of the rejectionist for making too much effort in preserving the ideas in the text. However, this is not so since current studies by liberationist scholars have shown that the theme is not to preserve the ideas in the text but rather to show how the text can be read to set people who have been marginalised free based on the reading of the Bible.

This study adopts the definition of Pamela Thimme’s understanding of feminism cited by Susan Brayford (2009) as “a political term describing a liberation movement that not only critiques the oppressive structures of society but, by its various voices and approaches, works for transformation” (p. 314). What this definition means to this research is that, there are structures in this text that do not permit women to enjoy certain liberties but by questioning this established structures, some transformations can be achieved. Like Osiek (1997) intimates earlier, liberation approach in feminist hermeneutics is already committed to certain causes that is meant to liberate the woman from cultural and religious subjugation through the reading of the Bible. The liberationist perspective chosen is therefore, in line with advocacy which seeks to fight for people who are oppressed in the society.

Thus, Numbers 27:1-11; 36 and Joshua 17:1-6 are read with particular focus on the scenes of the request, time of the request, and the response by those in authority. Since the reader is reading the text from the perspective of a

gender advocacy, questions like who has power and over whom and how is this power expressed are asked to unearth the power dynamics inherent in the text (Lawrence, 2009).

Though I am using the principles inherent in liberationist hermeneutics, I am also an African, which makes my application of this approach in reading the text different from how feminist readers, who are not Africans and Ghanaians specifically, will apply this method. Okure (1999) posits that:

African women's hermeneutics shares the concerns surrounding patriarchy, sexism and racism and add culture. It goes beyond these, or sees these as not end in themselves. African women see empowerment and liberation of the woman as a person in her own right... (p. 5).

Consequently, the manner in which the liberationist hermeneutics will be applied to the narratives of Zelophehad will bring to light the role gender advocacy can play in the fight of daughters against discriminatory laws/policies.

Organisation of the Work

The work is organised into six main chapters. The first chapter is made up of an introduction, background to the study, statement of the problem, literature review and the methodology.

Chapter two explains what gender advocacy is and discusses the various strategies that advocates use to achieve their goal. Chapter two also cites some examples of the activities of women groups that are fighting against discrimination against women.

In chapter three, the thesis traces the history of feminism which helps to situate the research in feminist criticism in Africa. The chapter also explains the evolving nature of feminist studies which give a basis for the Ghanaian feminist perspective. Chapter four uses reader-response criticism as the method from the perspective of gender advocacy to read the narratives on the daughters of Zelophehad.

Chapter five discusses the issues that come out of the reading. The chapter analyses the strategies that are used by the daughters of Zelophehad and the elders from the clan of Zelophehad. Some of the characters in the narrative are discussed in relation to their reaction to the suit the daughters presented to the leadership of the wilderness community. The issues from the reading are later analysed from the perspective of the Ghanaian feminist.

Finally, chapter six concludes the study by providing a summary to the entire research. It also discusses the objectives stated as well as how they have been achieved, and further proffers implications for the Ghanaian community.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that though the narrative on the daughters of Zelophehad are widely read, a perspective of advocacy that permits the exegete to explore other dimensions of the text has the possibility of generating new meanings on the text. This is because literature on how the narratives have been read by different scholars points to the influence method and perspective adopted to reading biblical texts can lead to different meanings; hence, the belief that a reading that uses advocacy as its perspective will offer a new and refreshing meaning to the narratives on the daughters of Zelophehad.

Further, the chapter has also shown that, land is an important asset in the liberation of women since access to land equals economic freedom which will help women name their own experiences in life.

Finally, the chapter has established that the environments from which women have been operating place limitations on them. Thus, the review of the works by scholars establishes that the daughters of Zelophehad had to confront a context that favours men and fight for something that society has denied them access to. Hence, this chapter has established that a reader-response criticism that places so much of the encounter between the reader and the text will help the researcher read the text from the perspective of gender advocacy which will help deduce the strategies the daughters used to achieve the success that many scholars praise them for.

CHAPTER TWO

GENDER ADVOCACY AND ITS STRATEGIES

Introduction

This chapter explores the strategies mostly used by gender advocates in fighting for equity of state resources and the rights of women. Thus one major question underlying this chapter concerns how gender advocates plan, and execute their agenda to promote equity among sexes on one hand, and, the government and the people on the other hand. These advocacy strategies facilitate the advocacy process, and subsequently, attract the needed attention and, help to solve the community's problem. The chapter is put in three main parts and addresses issues pertaining to definition of advocacy, activities of advocacy groups and the strategies used by advocates respectively.

On 27th March, 2014, an article in the Daily Graphic captioned, "Women's right to land: What every woman must know" discussed how women struggled to own and access land in Ghana in spite of the provisions made in the law. One of the reasons given to explain this unfortunate situation was the ignorance of most rural women to the existence of the PNDC Law 111. The article then went ahead to proffer some solutions to the problem identified.

Some of the solutions proffered were the role education and advocacy can play in reducing, if not eliminating, the problems women face in their bid to inherit land from their fathers and husbands. The suggestion in the article that women should resort to advocacy as one of the ways of resolving the gap

between the laws and the rights of women can be put into action by women in the church who use the Bible. They can refer to the case of the daughters of Zelophehad in Numbers 27:1-11; 36 and Joshua 17:1-6 to encourage themselves to stand for their rights in society. The thesis seeks to read Numbers 27:1-11; 36 and Joshua 17:1-6 to highlight the strategies used by the daughters of Zelophehad in their quest to be recognised as heirs to inherit their father. This chapter looks at the strategies used by gender advocates that aid them in influencing those in authority.

Further, the role of education as raised in the article refers to peoples' knowledge in the laws, policies and customary laws on inheritance in Ghana. The newspaper article was convinced that most women lost their inheritance due to ignorance and illiteracy which with good education, it can easily be resolved.

Moreover, advocacy was also explained as the process of influencing policy and decision-making. As the World Bank notes, "the act of advocating itself can open new spaces for citizen participation in the development process" (World Bank Module, 2003). Thus advocacy as suggested by the article is one of the ways that women can both partake in the process of governance and also speak against policies and laws that negatively affect them. However, for advocacy to have the desired effect there is the need for the advocate to have a plan or strategy. This chapter will isolate some of these strategies which will later be compared with the strategy adopted by the daughters of Zelophehad and the elders from the clan of Zelophehad

The chapter is subsequently divided into three sections. The first section provides a working definition for advocacy and gender advocacy as

used in the thesis. The second section further discusses the activities of groups, agencies and non-governmental organisations that employ advocacy in their quest to eliminate injustice and gender discrimination whilst the last section discusses the strategies mostly used by these groups with specific emphasis on groups that deal with women's rights to land.

The Term “Advocacy” Defined

Advocacy can generally be defined as changing relationships of power to effect change. It also involves the creation, reform and implementation of policies. A manual by Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO) defines advocacy as “a process that tackles unfair policies concerning disadvantaged people by working with communities and key stakeholders to bring about change” (p. 8). In the long run, advocacy ensures that, the rights of communities that are marginalised are recognised and realised.

Poudel and Luintel (2003) also explain advocacy as “a deliberate, systematic and organised way of influencing existing policies to either change or formulate alternative policies to suit targeted groups” (p. 59). Consequently, through advocacy, unfair policies can be changed or modified to meet the demands of the targeted groups. Another definition by a World Bank Manual (2003) describes advocacy as a means of influencing or changing relationships of power through representation, mobilisation and empowerment. Buckley (2014) goes further to describe advocacy as “the active support of an idea or cause expressed through strategies and methods that influence the opinions and decisions of people and organisations” (<http://www.apc.org/en/node/9456#f1>).

These definitions contain some key terms or phrases which are: influence, change, formulate, modify unfair policies or issues and marginalised or disadvantaged people or communities. Most of these key terms appear to be present in all the definitions cited above. Hence, it appears these scholars and organisations agree that most policies do not take into consideration the weak, vulnerable and disadvantaged in the society, but, through the activities of advocacy, the attention of people in authority can be drawn to these unfair policies to cause a change or transformation in the life of the vulnerable people. In this work, advocacy is defined as deliberately addressing a problem in the relevant political arena in order to improve the situation of people affected by the problem (Poudel and Luintel, 2003).

Gender advocacy, on the other hand, does more than fight against unfair developmental policies; in addition, it ensures that there is equity between both sexes. It aims at ensuring fairness between sexes, in all aspects of life, ranging from access to state resources (education) and rights to inheritance. Thus, at the end of the day, women are empowered and placed on the same pedestal as that of their male counterparts.

It must be emphasised that this general definition does not take into consideration the ongoing debate concerning the types of advocacy. These types affect the definition in terms of the agents pioneering or leading an advocacy. Advocacy can be embarked on by two groups of people: those who are directly affected by the issue; and those who are not directly affected by the issue. A World Bank Module argues that:

There is an ongoing debate between those who explain advocacy to mean “speaking on behalf of the voiceless (representation), those who

believe it is encouraging others to speak with you (Mobilization) and lastly those who believe it is supporting the voiceless to speak for themselves (Empowerment)” (World Bank Module, 2003, p. 2).

These three basic definitions explain the types of advocacy there are. But the focus of this thesis encapsulates the reasons given for each of the three types mentioned above. Consequently, this thesis argues that although an advocacy is seen as a Representation, a Mobilisation or an Empowerment, there are times it can be a combination of all three. All three forms are further explained below.

Representation occurs when a group of people, an organisation or an individual discovers that some people are being marginalised in the society due to the laws of the land or some unfortunate situation they find themselves in and, then, decides to speak for those being marginalised since they lack education, expertise or even the will power to fight for their rights. Thus, in representation, those engaged in the advocacy are not directly suffering from the problem being experienced by those they are representing. The United Nations and its subsidiaries are one of such organisations that fight for the rights of others, especially, those who cannot speak for themselves.

Mobilisation, however, includes the activist in the process for change. Here, the advocate encourages those affected to join them to seek for a change in the law or policy. In mobilisation, the advocate is directly affected by the unfair policy and law. Such groups or individuals involved in this type of advocacy can be made up of women who have suffered some form of abuse such as child marriage, female genital cutting, *Trokosi* as well as communities affected by the activities of mining.

The last type of advocacy to be discussed is Empowerment. Here, the affected citizens, groups or individuals are encouraged by the advocates to speak for themselves. Advocates who believe in this approach, argue that, when the affected person speaks for herself, it carries a lot of weight since they can provide certain details in the defective policy or law which the one doing representation may overlook. It also enables the people to take active part in the activities of government. Hence, policies that are developed from such collaboration will pay attention to the weak and vulnerable in the society.

In sum, advocacy groups could be made up of individuals, groups, entire communities and non-governmental organisations that seek the welfare of the weak and vulnerable in various communities to promote equity and harmony. These groups perform a lot of activities which range from fighting against systemic customary practices and beliefs to unfair policies and laws.

Activities of some advocacy groups

There are many groups, agencies, non-governmental organisations and individuals (both national and international) who aim to confront government and policy makers to reconsider policies that affect marginalised people in the society. Some of these international advocacy groups are Voluntary Service Oversea (VSO), a UK based organisation which aims to end poverty around the world through the services of volunteers; Oxford Committee for famine (OXFAM), an organization that also wishes to end poverty and ensure that citizens enjoy their rights fully; and the United Nations with its various wings that fight on behalf of the weak and vulnerable in the world. These bodies are mostly not affected by the issues they fight against so the type of advocacy they engage in can be likened to representation.

In Ghana, we have prominent groups such as Action Aid Ghana, a group that places the rights of women first; the Ark Foundation; Abantu for Development; Women in Law and Development in Africa (WiLDAF), FIDA-Ghana (Federation of International women lawyers in Africa, with branches in most African countries) which is also a representation of women lawyers and so many others who assist people affected by unfair laws and policies to seek redress. These groups aim at eliminating gender inequality and injustice in Ghana. Thus, they make use of advocacy in their bid to influence leaders to change unfair policies.

Advocacy groups that assist women specifically in their fight for access to land and issues relating to land are: Network for Women Rights in Ghana (NETRIGHT), FIDA, Uganda Women Network (UWONET), Civil Societies on Land (CICOL) and, in some cases, WiLDAF. These women groups work hand in hand with government agencies, law makers, judiciary and other organs of the government to influence policy decisions that negatively affect women and children in the society. Research has shown that effective advocacy has great importance in influencing policy, decision-making, and implementation, some of which are explored further below.

For instance, advocacy educates leaders, policy makers and others who make or carry out policies (World Bank Module, 2003). This is because there are times that policy makers may not be aware of some of the negative effects of a policy, and it is only those who are negatively affected who can draw their attention to the defective policy, for the necessary reforms to be enacted.

Furthermore, advocacy greatly assists in reforming existing policies, laws and budgets, which leads to the development of new projects and

programs thereby improving the life of those affected (World Bank Module, 2003). Citizens therefore, gain the opportunity to partake in the governance process bringing about improved democracy in the country. Public officials too become accountable to the populace. Thus, through advocacy, the gap between those with power and those without power is bridged. One thing that must be emphasised is that advocacy is not a onetime act or incidence, but it is a process which contains different sets of activities which must be followed diligently in order to yield positive results. This is because advocacy is/are activity/activities that are geared towards changing policies, values, practices and behaviour to build skills and competencies and, therefore, demands systematic plans (World Bank Module, 2003). The demands of advocacy enjoin on the activist to have a specific plan in mind to help achieve stated objectives. This plan leads us to what an advocacy strategy is.

Strategies and steps adopted by gender advocates

Since advocacy is a deliberate process involving intentional actions, it demands appropriate strategy which should be clear in guiding the entire enterprise. “Advocacy strategies attempt to solve the problem by getting at its systematic causes” (World Bank Module, 2003, p. 5). Advocacy strategy can be translated simply to “What has to change? Who can help bring about the change? How the change can be achieved and when this change can finally take effect or materialise?” (World Bank Module, 2003, p.5).

An advocate must first identify the problem and properly situate the problem in the context of the community she is representing. Secondly people who have power to bring about the change must be identified so that proper plans can be made to know how to get access to them. It will also help the

activist device plans that can influence that person or group of persons who have the power to cause the needed change. Further, advocates must be ready to suggest solutions to problems identified and, finally, provide timelines for the targets set. Strategy therefore is the lifeline of every advocacy and without a proper strategy an advocacy group will not achieve its stated objectives (VSO, 2009; World Bank Module, 2003).

In order for a group of people or individuals to achieve their objectives, advocacy must be translated into specific steps that can be followed. Poudel and Luintel (2003) explain that groups who embark on advocacy must have a clear understanding of the political culture so that they can devise effective ways of bringing about changes in that cultural context. Consequently, the agenda of the change should reflect the perspectives of the affected communities. Here, individuals or organisations who engage in advocacy choose issues that are affecting a particular group of people or a community. An example of the affected people can be women, children, girls or even an entire community who have been neglected by government, leaders of a community, religious leaders or a company.

Issues that may call for advocacy include lack of potable water, child trafficking, unequal access to land, abuse of women, child marriage, widowhood rites, female genital cutting, destruction of land by mining companies and many others. Some other problems may be societal perspectives on gender such as taboos on menstruation. The list can go on, but the choice of problem must be relevant to the marginalised group.

In order to make a positive impact and achieve stated objectives, a clear strategy must be made. The strategies help keep the advocate focused on

the issue and not lose interest when those in positions of power drag their feet. Extensive works done by researchers such as Poudel and Luintel (2003), Buckley (2014) and many advocacy agencies and organisations agree that some steps need to be followed so as to achieve needed results. Some of the steps generated for use by advocates are discussed below:

Identification of the problem and policy

The first step to consider is to identify the problem or the defective policy that is causing the problem. According to Buckley (2014), there is a need to delineate the issue affecting the community in order to establish policies enforcing this problem and how these policies, when changed, can shape the people affected. Poudel and Luintel (2003) also explain that identification of the problem can lead to the formulation of certain questions that can direct the campaign. Examples of the questions are: “is the problem really about women’s rights? Will the problem or policy, when changed, grant these women equal access to a particular resource?” (p. 60). These questions help establish the issue to advocate against or for. This point is very important in the advocacy process because it is when an individual or a group of people come to the realisation that there is a particular issue that is negatively affecting or robbing them of their rights before they can plan for ways of solving it. Hence, identification of the problem is the first step taken by advocates towards change or the transformation they desire.

Research and identification of critical issues

The second step to consider is research. Advocacy groups (VSO, OXFAM, Buckley, and NETRIGHT) agree this is a key step in attaining any level of success. Research gives background information on how the identified issue is

affecting the people. It also offers the advocate first hand information on the power and influence of the organisation or government agency they wish to influence. Valuable information on the opponent helps one prepare the terrain for the battle and, also, dictates the best approach to use to achieve maximum impact. Poudel and Luinel (2003) explain that it is through the research that one can formulate questions that will throw more light on the nature of the problem. Some of the possible questions are; “what is the nature of injustice; how can the injustice be proved? Which social institution, (family, community, market or state) is found to be directly (or indirectly) responsible for that particular problem?” (p. 62).

Taking a cue from the arguments above, the researcher will ask questions such as; “what were the laws on inheritance saying or not saying about daughters’ inheritance? Are there loopholes that are being used to abuse these women? How can the loophole in the law be used to change or reform the current oppressive law/policy”? These questions place the agenda in perspective and help the advocate understand the extent and nature of abuse. Thus, research places the problem identified in context for it to be addressed. This is because the context dictates how each step should be applied to yield maximum results.

It is also through this process that advocates discover whether the enterprise that they are about to embark on would be fruitful. They gain background knowledge on the issue, the people and those in authority and this help them put up strategies that can affect and influence the needed people to bring about the desired change.

Set objectives and demands

This step also focuses the effort of the advocacy group in one direction to achieve positive results. A manual by VSO (2009) further explained that the objectives simplify things by providing a ‘route map’ by which the problem can be solved. The objectives, therefore, should be clear, concise and measurable. Being clear, in this context, means the agenda set must not be ambiguous so that each and every one who hears or reads it can have a clear picture of what the people seek to achieve through their actions. Being, concise, in this context, can be understood as straight to the point and not clothed with many words and descriptions. It must also be very brief in order not to deter or even bore potential allies from joining the campaign. And lastly the objectives must be measurable so that they can be monitored and assessed from time to time to know the level of progress made (Poudel and Luintel, 2003). The objectives can be understood as the critical success criteria that the group must get right in order not to lose focus. Thus the role that a well set objective plays in advocacy can neither be ignored nor over-emphasised.

Design Strategies

In order to achieve the stated objectives, Poudel and Luintel (2003) explained that clear strategies should be devised. These strategies must be set in a way that they could constructively influence existing policies and practices at different levels. The strategies will help gain massive support base which will lead to identification of allies and, subsequently, single out opponents. The strategy is the road map that will help the group devise practical steps to take in order to influence those in authority and also gain support. When this is properly done, the needed support for the success of the

advocacy will be identified and used. At this stage advocates devise the specific action to take at each stage of the process so as to achieve positive results. It may start with, first, tabling their issues to the one in authority; second, negotiations follow and, if they face a stalemate, then, they must embark on mass education, campaign and, lastly, public defiance.

Networking and Alliance Building

Networking and alliance building is the life blood of any advocacy campaign. Networking is collaborating with bodies that share your vision or have similar goals. One thing that emerged in the research was that advocacy groups always brought on board sister groups to amass influence and achieve maximum impact. A clear example is NETRIGHT who mostly work with WiLDAF and CICOL when fighting for fair policies to ensure women's rights to land in Ghana. Activists argue that advocacy is a complex task and full of challenges, which demands that any support from people, groups and organisations with similar goals should be welcomed. Thus, the group should endeavour to increase their support base in order to achieve stated objectives. This could be done through lobbying (process of influencing people in authority to bring about a change in policy or practice), networking (sharing formal and informal information between individuals, agencies and organisations working on similar issues) and, finally, coalition (mechanism of building a network between existing groups, agencies or organisation) (Poudel and Luintel, 2003).

Gaining allies and building support is very necessary since they can motivate, encourage, and offer ideas and human resource that will be valuable to the cause. By identifying and gaining allies, one can easily single out

opponents, which will help strategise ways by which the efforts and power of influence these opponents could have over the campaign could be neutralised. Other means of building alliance is through media campaign and mass mobilisation through awareness creation.

Generate Resources

In order to achieve results, the need to generate both human and financial resources for the sustenance of the campaign cannot be overlooked. People who are knowledgeable and have special expertise on advocacy issue must be acquired or recruited to help make concrete suggestions as to identify what and how things are to be done. Also, money needed to carry out agenda must be raised to help sustain the campaign

The last two steps are action and, implementation and most importantly, monitoring and evaluation. After going through all these steps, it is necessary for the group to evaluate what they have done and what results they have achieved. This will help plan for other projects they will embark on in the future.

Asiimwe (2001), in an article, describes some practical strategies that have been adopted by women's rights groups to fight for co-ownership of land by spouses in Uganda. These strategies are not different from what we discussed above but rather portray how they are being applied to a real life situation. However, it must be stated that the above discussed strategies are general approaches used by most advocacy groups including gender advocates who may not necessarily be fighting for gender equity or rights to inheritance.

The strategies Asiimwe, on the other hand, describes in her work are what women rights groups have been using to fight for co-ownership of land

in Uganda. It is, therefore, relevant for this work since the thesis is about women's right to inherit land. These strategies are explained further below.

Networking

Asiimwe (2001) states, that, through the combined efforts of two groups, the Ugandan Women Network (UWONET) and the Ugandan Land Alliance (ULA), policy talks have been held with parliamentarians and key-policy makers to pass the co-ownership clause. Through their joint activities, they have raised the awareness on the need to pass the legislation governing domestic relations in order to neutralise the power of discriminatory customary laws. These groups have been able to incite more women groups with similar agenda to come together to fight for the same cause. This means that collaboration between groups is a great way to sustain a project and subsequently achieve success.

Use of boycotts

Asiimwe explains that, another strategy these women groups used to gain the attention of the ruling government was to threaten to boycott a referendum in 2000. Boycotts are refusals by groups or individuals to partake or contribute to a particular agenda or national event. These groups realised that the government had special interest in the referendum and, thus, used their power as voters to gain attention. She emphasises that women activists can use their political leverage as voters to make the government respond to their concerns when all attempts to get them to the negotiation table have failed.

However, the only time a group or organisation can use this strategy is when they have a massive support base. Also, knowledge about the weakness of the opponent can only be obtained through proper research, therefore,

making research an invaluable asset in advocacy. Knowledge of the terrain, weakness, strengths and power of influence of those opposing the problem identified is key to the success of the campaign. These women were able to force the Ugandan ruling government to the negotiating table through their threats because they had a large support base.

National mourning

Another strategy used by these groups was public mourning. Mourning is a way one can show grief and loss. Mourning attracts the sympathy of onlookers and, when publicly done, signifies profound loss. She explains that these women movements decided to mourn on a national women's day that have been celebrated for years all over the world. Women in the rural areas were encouraged to partake in the event since they were the most affected by the silent law. Placards and black t-shirts with inscriptions on women's rights slogans on it were shared among these rural women. Women who showed up for the event held placards and wore the t-shirts to mourn the loss of the co-ownership bill.

This action was so strong that the president was forced to include the co-ownership law in his speech (Asiimwe, 2001). She describes further such public show of loss and grief is a great strategy to whip up support from the populace. To her this act achieved a greater impact because the women at the grassroots participated and came to understand what these women advocacy groups were all about. They also gained the support from world bodies because it was an international women's day which is highly monitored by the United Nations.

Information, education and communication (IEC)

Another strategy used by the coalition of women groups in Uganda was information, education and communication. Materials such as pamphlets, leaflets and posters were distributed at seminars and programmes to educate politicians, the press and the populace about the need for the co-ownership Bill. Documentaries were also made to appeal to the emotions of the people on how the absence of this law was affecting poor and innocent women. This process, she argues, can also be adopted by women activists since it helps educate and send the needed information out in so as to gain more allies.

Another strategy that emerged with this is the use of the media. Here, air time on several media platforms were bought and utilised to explain the reason behind the steps they have taken. Popular radio and Television talk shows were also used to explain the content of the goal (co-ownership bill) so as to dispel the fears of people, especially, males who feared they will lose the authority they wielded in the community if the women won their case. Due to the extensive nature of these strategies, women activists and organisations had to co-ordinate their efforts in order to gain the support of the populace. This has, therefore, led to the unity between the various women organisations fighting for the same cause.

Legal education

Legal education was also conducted as part of the strategy since it was mostly out of ignorance of their rights that a lot of women ended up being discriminated against. The association of women lawyers (FIDA-U) conducted legal education geared towards educating the rural women who were mostly affected by the oppressive customary laws. This is because lack of

decentralisation will make the cause the duty of a selected few. But a well decentralised education will ensure massive support from all parts of the country. Most of the legal terms were difficult to understand so these women lawyers went from village to village and educated the women on their rights to own land. This act brought the fight to the door-step of the people, thus, ensuring continuity in this prolonged fight.

Wining and Dining

One other strategy which was used by the women groups was organising lunch and breakfast seminars for members of parliament. These parliamentarians were the ones who were going to vote for the passage of the co-ownership bill. During such social gatherings, women activists lobbied and explained the need for the co-ownership bill to be passed into law. These groups also made use of international women organisations to appeal to the president and parliament. Subsequently, in order not to appear as being biased towards women in the country discussions on the bill began. This step was taken by the government in order not to lose the flow of external help from donor countries and the United Nations.

Public Hearing

The last strategy to be discussed is Public hearing. With this approach, women activists organised public and open durbars where women who were experiencing discrimination with regard to land ownership came to share their experiences to gain support of people. This approach appeals to the sensitivity of the public which places those in authority under a lot of pressure.

Conclusion

In a nutshell, this chapter has established that advocacy is not a spontaneous reaction to a situation in the society but a well planned activity aimed at influencing those in authority to bring about change. Therefore the chapter discussed the activities and strategies that are mostly used by advocacy agencies. It was discovered that their strategies ranged from indoor activities to outdoor programmes. It also ranged from negotiations to boycotts and even, in some extreme cases, public defiance. It was revealed that a well laid plan contributed to the success achieved by gender advocates. Hence any advocate/gender advocate who wishes to be successful must have a plan and follow this plan in order to achieve their goal. Consequently, the researcher will approach the narratives on the daughters of Zelophehad from the perspective of a gender advocate who will attempt to deduce the strategy adopted by the daughters and later the elders from the clan of Zelophehad. The strategy adopted will then be related to the success achieved.

However, before the reading is done, one must acknowledge that gender advocates work to ensure equity between male and female in the society. Thus, the work of gender advocates can be likened to feminist critics who seek to liberate women from the various forms of abuse ranging from customary practices to policies and laws by the state. Moreover, since gender has to deal with either male or female, the choice of the feminist angle is help situate the work within the framework of women liberation. This is because gender advocates who focus on feminism will have the sole purpose of helping women and not men. Invariably since this thesis is interested in the daughters'

Zelophehad, it makes the choice of exploring the development of feminism appropriate.

As a result, the next chapter surveys the efforts of women in their struggle to name their own experiences and speak against unfair customary rights over the years. This will help place the entire thesis within the framework of feminist studies in the Bible.

CHAPTER THREE

A GHANAIAN FEMINIST HERMENEUTICS

Introduction

For centuries men have found delight in defining women, hardly giving a thought to their own Christological self-definition, or to how women experience them in the patriarchal system. This project of naming/defining woman started in Eden and goes on in different ways till today (Okure, 1999, p. 7).

Okure's argument above summarise the struggles of women in the society. She explains that, for a long time women were not allowed, per the design of most patriarchal communities, to talk about themselves and their experiences. They existed under the shadow of men and to her this started as far back as when humankind was created. She explains that, the only thing that keeps changing is the mode of abuse, which has become the task of most feminist groups to identify the type of abuse and denounce it.

Women have therefore, struggled to define themselves and tell their own story. Women have had to depend on men to name and describe their experience which was based on what they perceived and not what the women really experienced. However, the desire to break free and tell their story even in a society controlled and defined by patriarchy has been part and parcel of the feminine race. The struggle for women therefore, has been to gain the freedom to talk about their own experiences in the society. However, society's influence on a people is rooted in the very fabric of their life. Okure (1999)

explains that culture serves the inevitable, even if unconscious, filter of and stamp for all we do as humans. Anyone who tries to veer off these societal norms is stigmatised against and ends up being an outcast. This seems to have been the fate of women who first rose to defend the rights of women and speak against the policies, rules and entanglements of patriarchy. These women activists faced a lot of opposition but their insistence that women ought to describe and explain their own experiences in life and not be described by men helped them gain the listening ear that is being enjoyed today (Okure, 1999).

In spite of this achievement, the battle seems not to be over since the message and process of attaining emancipation in all facets of life appear not to have reached all societies and women around the world, completely. For women to be able to define their experiences they need to gain social, religious, political and economic freedom. This independence can occur when they are able to appreciate their power (Exum, 2001b).

Though laws and regulations today seem to give women enough room to define themselves, there are still underlying issues which keep fighting against complete independence. Today, some women in Africa and, specifically, Ghana, are still struggling to obtain political positions, state resources and own land simply because they are women (Kuenyehia, 2006). This is because of the underlying thought that women are inferior to men in spite of the educational achievements of women in recent times. The main purpose of this chapter is to argue for the need for a Ghanaian feminist reading of the Bible with special emphasis on advocacy. Though, this is not the first time a Ghanaian is studying the Bible from the perspective of feminism, it is

however, different because of its dependence on advocacy as a tool for reading biblical texts.

The chapter is divided into four main parts. The first part gives an overview of the rise and struggle of feminism in Europe and explains why we have and need different types of feminism. The second part then traces the development of biblical feminism in the West while the third part describes what African feminist hermeneutics is tracing its development on the African continent before offering the needed justification for a Ghanaian feminist reading of the Bible. The last part then describes what the Ghanaian feminist reading should entail.

Overview of the rise of Feminism in Europe and the Americas

The activities of women in their struggle to name and describe their own experiences began in the late 19th and 20th centuries (Rampton, 2015). Scholars have mostly segmented this period of identity and struggle into three major phases: Phase I (1840s- 1950s), Phase II (1960s-1980s) and Phase III (1990s).

Phase I (1840s-1950s)

This phase began in the late 19th century and ended in the early twentieth century. The major driving force for this first phase was the fight for women's right to vote. This struggle was set off with the Convention at Seneca Falls in 1848 which came out with some declarations aimed at shaping the ideology and political strategies of the new movement (Krolokke and Sorensen, 2006; Rampton, 2015). Women activists at this stage were concerned with the right to vote (women suffrage), the right to be educated, better working conditions, and access to equal opportunities for women.

This phase was led by feminist liberalists who believed in the autonomy of the individual. They argued for a “social and political structure that would recognise equality of all individuals and provide them with equality of opportunities” (Krolokke and Sorensen, 2006, p. 20). The activities of the liberal women during this period influenced women activists in both Western and Eastern societies throughout the 20th century.

This phase was also dominated by white middle class and well educated women (Krolokke and Sorensen, 2006). In this stage of the struggle, actions such as speaking in public, organising rallies, mounting platforms to speak, and holding protests were all viewed as roles meant solely for males and so all the women who engaged in any of these activities were seen to be defying the laws of nature. These acts were viewed as “unladylike” and against the laws of nature (Rampton, 2015). This was as a result of the existence of the stereotyped gender roles (the place of the woman was in the home with her husband and children). Women who organised rallies and spoke on mounted platforms were considered displaying masculine behaviours, which was unacceptable by social conventions at that time (Krolokke and Sorensen, 2006).

The major thrust of the revolution was that women and men should be treated equally and women should not only be given access to the same resources and positions as men but, also, be acknowledged for their competences and abilities. Hence, feminism received the name, “equal-opportunities feminism or equity feminism” (Campbell, 1989, p 17). These women activists rejected biological reasons given to discriminate against

women. The woman, to them, should be judged based on her competence and capability and not on her gender.

The rise of socialist feminists like Rosa Luxembur (1870- 1919), Alexandra Kollanti (1873-1952), Emma Goldman (1869-1940) and many others who shared the common belief that women and men deserved equal opportunities took place during this era. However, for these Socialist feminists, the main focus was on working class women. They were preoccupied with how patriarchy discriminated against women based on the unimportance attached female role such as housework. This led to the demand of Socialist feminist for women to be paid for doing housework. Consequently, while the liberalists sought participation in government, socialist focused on equal opportunities for women in paid jobs and an end to gender segregation in jobs (Rampton, 2015). These two feminist groups (Liberal and Socialist) continued to develop and maintain strong voices in the 20th century feminism though they were soon challenged by other types of feminism such as Radical feminism and Womanist movement. This is because the concept of equity had influenced women from all walks of life that each person felt entitled to their own version of equity. This phase ended when women in America attained the right to vote around the 1920s.

Phase II (1960s-1980s)

The second phase occurred within the period of the early 1960s to the late 1980s. Those at the fore front in the struggle in this phase were the Radical feminists who were concerned with reshaping the society and restructuring institutions within the society with the basic assumption that they were all essentially patriarchal (Rampton, 2015). Subsequently, the attention

of these feminists shifted to the origins of women's oppression and many theoretical books were written to analyse the forms of women's oppression and tracing roots of this oppression (Rampton, 2015).

One of such publications was Betty Friedan's (1963) work which gave voice to a lot of women who felt discontented and disoriented for being pushed back to housekeeping positions after graduating from college. This feeling was created in view of the fact that women who were largely used to keeping the economy running during the wars were all laid off to make way for the men after the war. This, thus, led to the "use of the phrase 'women liberation'. Though this phrase has been used on countless occasions to refer to feminism throughout history, it appeared in print for the first time in 1964" (<http://www.saylor.org/courses/polsc101/#3.2.3>).

Another significant contribution to the struggle was made by Kate Millet (1970) in the publication of her work, *Sexual Politics*, in which she argued that the woman had the right to own her body and sexuality. She was convinced "that patriarchy, through its chief institution such as the family, placed a lot of barriers and social control on the individual even in situations where the government has failed" (p. 45). Situations where the woman's identity has been linked to her family (marriage, husband and children) were questioned. Consequently, conclusions were drawn that women could only gain freedom when they were freed from dependency on men and family (Millet, 1970). Thus, women should be allowed to engage in a more "productive labour". It also led to themes like "Sisterhood and solidarity, woman's struggle is class struggle and the personal is political" (Carol Hanisch as cited by Rampton, 2015). Such themes were to encourage women

to forge great bonds in their pursuance of sexual and political freedom. One incidence that climaxes the stance of women at that time was the protest by women movements, against beauty pageants. Feminist protestors stood against the Miss American pageant event in 1968 and 1969 (Krolokke and Sorensen 2006). Krolokke and Sorensen (2006) cite Freeman who explained that these women were angered by the way the pageant placed emphasis on the physical appearance of women as compared to what they thought and did. This emphasizes the aim of the struggle at that time; to be recognised for their competence and not their beauty. Thus, if the first phase focused on absolute rights such as suffrage(right to vote and take part in choosing political leaders), the second wave was largely concerned with issues such as the end to discrimination against women based on “oppressive beauty culture” (Krolokke and Sorensen, 2006).

This Radical wave of feminism did not happen in isolation as other post-war movements were formed at that time to equally fight for their rights. Examples of these movements were the Anti-Vietnam war, Lesbian and Gay movement and, in the United States, the civil rights and Black Power movements. These movements criticised capitalism and imperialism and represented the interest of the oppressed groups (the working class, black women and homosexuals).

In the 1980s, Bell Hooks and other women of colour drew attention to the lack of voice for the most oppressed women (black women). These women questioned the ideologies of white middle-class and heterosexual feminists who were leading the struggle. They (Hooks and the other women of colour) felt mis-represented and raised the issue of a differentiated identity politics

based on gender, race/ethnicity, class and sexuality. Thus, there was the need for a breakaway leading to the development of Black feminism which later became known as Women of Colour and Third World feminism. This was due to the new understanding gained by these women that they can each fight for themselves since they each had unique and diverse experiences.

Liberal feminists, during this period, also believed that the discrimination against post-war middle class women was due to their lack of social power, political influence and education. Aside better payment for workers, they also asked that housewives should be paid a kind of citizens' income as compared to those working in public institutions. They wanted even house wives to gain some level of independence from their husbands' financial control. While Radical feminists were doubtful of state institutions, liberal feminists wanted access and opportunity to influence these institutions. The Radicals rejected women inclusion in institutions which they believed have contributed to oppressing women while the Liberals wanted to be part of these same institutions to effect change.

Women also began questioning accepted standards of authority as many of them had then gained higher education. The new understanding and education gained by these women led them to the realisation that each person had her own unique experience which needs to be properly addressed in the struggle. As a consequence, different feminisms gradually grew into what is now often referred to as "identity politics" (Krolokke and Sorensen, 2006, p. 12).

By the end of this phase, it was no longer a matter of whether one was a feminist but rather which kind one belonged to. It also initiated education of

women which developed the interest in research into women issues. This has now grown into diverse disciplinary fields such as Womanist, Gender and Feminist studies. This phase was very significant because it encouraged women to attain higher education in order to challenge male superiority in the society. These educated women also came to the realisation that though they were all women, each group of women experienced patriarchy differently and, therefore, needed to express this experience in their own way. Feminist movements also focussed on the passing of the Equal Rights Amendment which would ensure there is equal protection for both males and females. This Amendment when ratified would ensure that no one is discriminated against on the basis of his sex. Thus the passing of this on 22 March 1972 marked an important phase in the fight for equality at that time. However, the Amendment did not meet its conditions in 1982 thus pushing the fight for the ratification by 38 states to the third phase of the feminist struggle.

Phase III (1990s)

The issues of the second phase developed into the issues in the third phase. That is, issues in the second phase did not end completely and the third phase began. One of such issues was the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment, which was derailed in 1982 and eventually had to be picked up by the third phase feminist. This phase also saw the growth and acceptance of lesbianism as a threat to male superiority. It also saw the use of the birth control pills and the fight for abortion. All these developments were to grant women greater control over their body in terms of sexuality and reproduction (Rampton, 2015).

Hence, there were calls for a change in female sexual behaviour. Women were encouraged to keep multiple sexual partners and view sex as a source of gaining pleasure as their male counterparts did. However, these developments led to public outcry from both males and some first wave feminists who felt the sexual revolution had gone too far. They argued that this sexual liberation was a tool males used to gain free sex devoid of responsibilities or obligations as stipulated by traditional social norms (). Most of these feminists realised that the relaxation of social attitudes and glorification of pornography rather turned women into sexual objects of men (Rampton, 2015).

The developments in these three major phases affected women everywhere who felt that they were being denied their rights or being subjugated by patriarchy. This understanding also took place among biblical feminists who also felt that, men have used the Bible to justify the inferior status of women in the society. Some women who found themselves in this field sought to reinterpret biblical passages that have been mostly used by patriarchy to achieve their goal. Thus, while the struggle for recognition and acceptance was going on in the secular world, at the same time, the struggle to liberate the feminine image in the Bible was also going on. And its success led to the development of various branches of feminist interpretation of the Bible.

History of Feminist Biblical Studies

As the struggle for suffrage in the first phase by the early women movements went on in Europe and the West, there were some women who also felt that the Bible, for the longest time, had been used to justify the

subjugation of women (Setzer, 2014). Claudia Setzer (2014) on this issue, opines:

The Bible itself evoked a mixed response. Some feminists indicted it as a major tool in the centuries-long subordination of women, while others argued that the biblical text like religion itself was irrelevant to the struggle for women's suffrage and the reform of society (pp. 234-235).

This mixed reaction formed that basis of the first phase of biblical feminism which wanted to reread and re-interpret the biblical text to counter the dominant interpretation given to some narratives in the Bible. This group was made up of untrained lay women who felt that there was the need for female voices to be heard in the field of biblical interpretation. They were referred to as untrained not because they lacked education but they had not received official training on how to properly use biblical methods to interpret the Bible (Bellis, 1994). They were also referred to as lay women because they were not trained theologians and were mostly made up of educated women from the field of science and medicine (Bellis, 1994). These women could no longer tolerate how men constantly picked biblical passages to abuse the rights of women.

Women outside biblical scholarship like Dr. K. Bushnell (a medical missionary worker in China), Margaret Crook (1960), and Elsie Carver (1967) challenged women to take part in biblical research in order to liberate women. The publication of Bushnell's work, *God's word to women* and the publication of *The Bible status of women* by Reverend Lee Anna Starr all pushed for the need for women to take active part in

the interpretation of the Bible since this could lead to better understanding of the status of women in biblical culture (Bellis, 1994, p. 4).

The Adam and Eve story was one such narrative that was used to postulate a subordinate image of women (Bellis, 1994). By the 1830s – 40s, people began to show their displeasure over how the Bible has been used, especially, in line with its interpretation. They, therefore, called for a new approach to read and interpret the Bible. “This uprising was not done only by white women but also African -American women who also felt that the Bible had liberative tendencies that could help them gain freedom from slavery” (Bellis, 1994, p.4). Sheila Klopfer (2013) intimates that Christian abolitionist such as Lucretia Mott, Sarah and Angelina Grimke understood the Bible to be generally liberating and so sought to interpret the Bible which became the bases for opposing slavery and gender inequalities in America. Christian abolitionists were Christians who sought to use the Bible which has been used earlier to justify slavery, to bring it to an end (Bellis, 1994).

Thus, while some women felt that the Bible was totally irrelevant in their struggle, others also felt that the Bible which has been used to profess subordinate roles for women can be used in a new light. They felt that rather than the biblical text being bias against women, it was the interpretation that has been in favour of patriarchy. This opposition to the interpretation of the Bible was given form when Elizabeth Cady Stanton and a committee of women came out with *The Women’s Bible* to counteract the oppressive power of the Bible against women. Stanton and Gage (1880), thus, saw the church as a major obstacle to women’s right. On several fronts they realised how

theodicy has been given a male image which goes to confirm male superiority over women. Subsequently, this ideological understanding also influence the leadership roles assign to males and females in the churches which influence the choice of methodologies applied to read the Bible.

In the later part of the 19th Century, many feminist Christians' voices dealt with scripture, but these early activities of women in biblical interpretation did not necessarily point towards the development of feminist criticisms of the Bible. Bellis (1994) points out that, though these women were all not trained in biblical scholarship, they, however, proposed and pushed for a methodology or an approach that placed the needs of women first. Their proposal can be viewed today as a prototype of feminist biblical criticism which was established later.

Another woman who contributed to this era of feminist biblical hermeneutics was Margaret Crook (1960) whose publication, *Women and Religion*, sought to question "male domination of the Judeo-Christian tradition" (Bellis, 1994, p.5). The use of "He" for divinity and male domination that appear to be tailored after the Judeo-cultural tradition were visible in the church. This tradition reflected in the interpretations of the Bible as well as the leadership structures in the church. As until then, these women believed that when biblical texts are carefully translated and, subsequently, interpreted, it would point to equality among the sexes (Bellis, 1994; Milne, 1997). They were convinced that the text have liberative tendencies which they could rely on. This view, however, changed and ushered in the second phase of the feminist biblical scholarship which approached the Bible as trained theologians.

In spite of the efforts of the women above, feminist hermeneutics did not develop as one would have expected until the 1970s. This was because their efforts were neither organised nor systematic. They were also not properly trained in the methodologies used to reading the Bible and, so, phase two of feminist biblical criticism ushered in a new crop of women properly equipped to challenge the dominant males in the field of biblical interpretation. Women who rose at this stage were trained biblical scholars who used accepted biblical methodologies to interpret the Bible. It is, therefore, not surprising that Jacobs (2001) cites Milne (1997) who describes this phase as “the phase of professionalism” (p. 84). To her, then, it was “the phase that feminist questions were placed within the framework of professional biblical scholarship. The main aim was to “free the text from its patriarchal entanglements and gain recognition in the field of biblical criticism” (Jacobs, 2001, p. 84).

Feminist scholars, therefore, used historical critical method to investigate texts within the Bible which highlight the efforts of women and also re-interpret passages from feminist perspectives (Jacobs, 2001; Klopfer, 2013). Klopfer (2013) explains that some of these women, including Letty Russell, believed that thorough research would reveal equality in the Bible which had been hidden by years of androcentric and misogynistic interpretation. Stories about Deborah and some women in the Old Testament gave them great joy as they realised there were women who achieved a lot by themselves; thus, affirming their earlier belief that women had been more than just tools in the hands of men.

However, they soon realised that every positive example of women story they discovered were outnumbered by other stories that countered these examples. Feminist critics then identified that it was not only the interpretations that have been bias but biblical texts have been highly androcentric. An example is Gen. 17:17; 18:12 where God treats the laughter of Abraham differently from that of Sarah (Bellis, 1994; Brayford, 2009). Feminists believe that God's reaction to the woman was harsh and unfair as he forgave the male but rebuked the female for the same offense. God's reaction in this case, clearly supports arguments by Mary Daly and her allies who believe that the Bible is too androcentric to be of any use to women in their struggle.

Klopper (2013) joins the discussion to point out that the Christian God is a male God who sent a Son (also a male) leaving little room for women in this salvation history except as handmaiden of men. This led some of the feminist scholars who were pessimistic to argue that patriarchy in the Bible and the Christian tradition itself, were hopelessly oppressive of women, subjugating them repeatedly under male authority.

Mary Daly (a feminist theologian), leading this group of feminist revolutionists and based on the above understanding, totally rejected the scripture as authoritative. In spite of the extreme stance of the rejectionists, the challenge for most feminists in this phase was how they could present a different image of women in the Bible when they were using the "traditional methods of analysis to investigate non-traditional questions" (Jacobs, 2001, p.84). The traditional method of analysis was the historical critical method which was employed by scholars of this phase to interpret the Bible and the

non-traditional questions had the interest of women as the main focus. The Post Modern Bible (as cited by Jacob, 2001) posits that one of the weaknesses of this phase was “... it presupposed naive identification between women across cultures and historical periods, in this way assuming an essential sameness among women” (p.84).

This weakness identified by Milne and other scholars is what is believed to have influenced the transition to third phase feminism which took place in the 21st Century. The third phase, unlike the second, acknowledges the important role gender, patriarchy and women experience played in the feminists reading of biblical texts (Jacobs, 2001). Subsequently, non-white feminists who believed their interests were not fully catered for by the white feminists found their voice during the third phase. The argument of Bell Hooks (2015) and other non-white feminists (such as Womanist, Mujerista and Postcolonial) was that there is the need to consider race-related subjectivities.

Further, there was the need to consider issues of differences between sexes, thus, calling attention for different types of feminisms. Womanist feminists played very significant role in this phase by pointing out how the experience of the white woman was different from that of the African-American woman. They argued that the African-American woman did not only struggle with patriarchy but also racism. They further explain that, though the Bible has been used to oppress a lot of African-American women, some still continue to search the biblical text for survival and liberation from oppression which eventually contributed to the development of the hermeneutics of survival or liberationist hermeneutics (Jacobs, 2001).

Feminist scholars agree that the experiences of women around the world are different and can, therefore, not be represented under one strict umbrella. This realisation led to the formation of feminist approaches that focused on the needs of African women within the African context. African women who went to Europe and the West to study also realised that they can read the Bible to reflect their needs which the broad feminist goals loose site of.

Feminist Biblical Interpretation in Africa

The term, “feminism”, in Africa is problematic since a lot of scholars in Africa feel it does not adequately explain what they do with the Bible (Okure 1999, Mbuwayesango, 2014). It is, therefore, not surprising that African women scholars have given different names to how they interpret the Bible. Madipoane Masenya, instead of adopting the term feminist uses the term *Bosadi* (womanhood) which she feels best describes how she approaches and uses the Bible (Masenya, 1995; Nkabala, 2013). Feminist scholars in Africa have given different names to how they approach and interpret a text. Musa Dube (2009) intimates that in response to the *Talitha Cum* call, (a term drawn from Mark 5: 21-43 to inspire African scholars to write) African feminist scholars proposed different approaches to read the Bible. She proceeded to cite Oduyoye (Inculturated feminist hermeneutics); Okure (hermeneutics for life); and Msaenya (*bosadi* hermeneutics). Dube (2009) explains that, together with her “Postcolonial feminist biblical hermeneutics” African women have discovered ways to resist cultural, racial, gender and international oppression in their own unique ways.

All these differing reactions to the term “feminist/feminism” on the African continent show that most women on the continent believe their

experiences as Africans have not been fully represented in the broad feminist goals. This influenced some feminist scholars in Africa to identify the lapse between “feminism” as done on the continent and outside the continent.

Teresa Okure (1999), for example, reports that:

African women’s hermeneutics share the concerns surrounding patriarchy, sexism, and racism that other types of feminists (womanist and mujerista) subscribe to. In addition, the African woman adds culture which has compelling influence on the life and decisions of people on the continent (Okure, 1999, p. 5).

She further posits that African women do not only approach the text because of gender liberation but include, also, the liberation of the African continent (women, children and men). One common thing one can deduce from African women who have attempted to define “feminism” on the continent is that they all agree that, for African women, the quest for liberation from patriarchy and sexism can be achieved with the support of men (Martey, 1998; Okure, 1999; Oduyoye, 2000,). The African woman’s problem is not caused by their men alone but, rather a culture of oppression which is embedded in the way both men and women were all brought up coupled with the ones that were introduced by the missionaries and colonialists who entered the African continent. Martey (1998) intimates that:

...unlike other feminist ideologies, the African feminist paradigm has developed within a context which looks at human life from a total, rather than a dichotomous and exclusive perspective. It gives birth to a significant future which signals the end of all vestiges of oppression (p. 51).

Martey's argument points to an inclusive nature of African feminism where women in Africa seek their liberation together with their men. This makes feminism in Africa a little different from the Western, European and Asian feminism with their desire to include men in the struggle. Okure (1999) (as cited by Mbuwayesango, 2014) raises two arguments to explain why women on the continent find it problematic to use the term, "feminism". She explains that:

African women (and men for that matter) do not, as a cultural rule, start with the issue of methodology. Their primary consciousness in doing theology is not method but life concerns, their own and those of their own peoples. Second, Africa cannot boast of many "professionally trained women biblical scholars" (p. 75).

Okure (1999) believes that the lack of adequate trained biblical scholars and theologians is hampering the convergence of an acceptable term for what African women do with the Bible. To her, trained women scholars would have been able to merge cultures and agree on something. However, Mbuwayesango (2014) disagrees with Okure (1999) on this. Although she (Mbuwayesango) agrees that there are few "professionally trained women biblical scholars", on the other hand, she questions what a lack of sufficient professional women biblical and theological scholars has got to do with a uniform method of interpreting the Bible. Instead, she believes it is the vast geographical landscape and the multiplicity of languages spoken on the African continent that have contributed to this problem. She is right, and I will even go further to argue that the different and multiple languages mean there

are different cultures and environments which lead to different but unique experiences for women on the continent.

Theresa Hinga (2002) joins the argument on the impossibility of harmonising all women experiences by stating that:

Women around the globe have come to realize that women's experiences are extremely diverse. There is no such thing as generic women's experiences... the diversity of women's experiences have therefore occasioned the rise of several feminist theologies as women around the globe wrestle with the often peculiar ways in which sexism impacts them in their particular social, political and historical location (p. 79)

Experiences of women over the years have been the catalyst for emergence of varied feminist methodologies (Amoah, 1995; Hinga, 2002; Martey, 1994; Mbuwayesango, 2014; Oduyoye, 1998; Okure, 1999). This need to give room to each individual or group's experiences led to the development of Womanist hermeneutics among the African-American women. These women feel that the broad main stream feminism dealt with issues that fell outside the purview of the African-American woman. They are conscious of the fact that they do not only experience sexism but also racial abuse which influences the way and manner they approach and interpret biblical texts.

Mujerista hermeneutics also came up to address concerns of Latina/Hispanic women on the injustices they faced which they believed shape their experiences and, therefore, affect the way they interpret the texts in the Bible (Hinga, 2002). The list can go on because no experience can be the same as a result of culture and the geographical location of the group or the

individual. Experience and context, therefore, remain two influential variables in feminist hermeneutics all over the world. These two are what make each feminist hermeneutic unique and what eventually inform the various feminist hermeneutics on the African continent. All these, I believe, make it difficult to find an umbrella name.

However, it can be argued that: this problem is more linguistic than ideological. Thus, if African women, name themselves feminist or womanist it should not be understood as a limitation of one particular group but it should be viewed as a lapse that has risen as a result of the linguistic complexities inherent in the African context (Oduyoye, 2000). This explanation by Oduyoye, sums up the argument on how to name and describe what African women do with the Bible on the continent. One can therefore say that, it does not matter what name we (Africans) adopt (feminist/ womanist); what needs to be made clear is that it is different from what women outside the continent who mostly use these terms mean when they apply them to their readings. For our contexts and experiences are unique and different. In spite of all these differences that come about as a result of the varying contexts and experiences of the women, feminist hermeneutics in Africa has the central theme of liberating women from patriarchy (Okure, 1999; Mbuwayesango, 2014). This issue of liberation is what drove African women to stand up and challenge biased interpretations of the Bible. Thus,

Just as men on the continent used the Bible as a resource in their struggle against political and economic oppression, so did the women try to use the Bible as a resource to liberate themselves from

androcentric readings of the Bible. Their struggle is embedded in the history of feminism on the continent (Mbuwayesango, 2014, p. 73).

Though this section is supposed to talk about the history of feminist biblical studies, it must be made clear that it is difficult to separate feminist hermeneutics on the continent from feminist theology (Mbuwayesango, 2014). Mbuwayesango argues that a lot of women who have received training in biblical methodologies on the continent double as theologians and so, there is a deficit when it comes to people who are strictly trained as feminist biblical scholars. She, therefore, intimates: “a feminist biblical study is one strand intricately woven into the fabric of African feminist theology” (p. 73). This, therefore, means the history of feminist biblical hermeneutics on the continent is embedded in the history of feminist theological research in Africa (Mbuwayesango, 2014). This is because some aspects of Black Theology is consistent with feminist approaches to reading the Bible with its common interest in using the Bible to liberate people who are going through various degrees of oppression.

On the issue of how feminist hermeneutics started in Africa, scholars have had divergent views. Mbuwayesango (2014) explains, “African feminism started with the first African woman’s encounter with the Bible” (p.71). She cites an example of an exchange that occurred between Mmahutu (a senior wife of chief Mothobi of Ba Tlhaping people of South Africa) and a missionary called John Campbell and his group as early as 1813. She clarifies,

Feminist biblical studies in Africa began with the work of early missionaries in the building of churches and later establishment of African Independent Churches. African women, through the

establishment of churches, partook in church activities including reading the Bible in groups. Their aim was to seek for some answers to their daily life problems from the Bible (Mbuwayesango, 2014, p.71).

Though these early women were not trained in the various biblical methodologies, they still interpreted the Bible to provide solutions to their daily occurrences such as barrenness, diseases and their joys and sorrows in general. To her, this early encounter between African women and the Bible could be “referred to as ‘feminist’ even though they did not use any of the approaches by Western scholars” (Mbuwayesango, 2014, p. 71).

Subsequently, one of the major focuses of feminist biblical hermeneutics in Africa has been the context of the African woman or the reader. Like their forebears, African women today are not only concerned with the original meaning of the text but rather the appropriation of the text into their own context. Through their interaction with the Bible, they gained the understanding that the Bible is a powerful tool which, when properly used, can liberate the oppressed and marginalised on the continent (Mbuwayesango, 2014).

This earliest encounter did not lead to the formation of any feminist group or movement on the continent. However, years later, some women had the opportunity to be trained in the biblical methodologies and so, through their training, they became better equipped to properly interpret the Bible. Due to the training they received, they were able to discover how the Bible and its interpretation have been used by males to subjugate women on the continent.

These trained women, upon returning to their countries, came to one realisation that, until they begin to interpret the Bible themselves, men and

foreign researchers will continue to interpret the Bible to subjugate them (Oduyoye, 1998; Hinga, 2002; Mbuwayesango, 2014). Mbuwayesango (2014) states that: “with time women on the continent became increasingly aware of the implications of the absence of women as subjects in the doing of theology” (p. 73). On this same issue Oduyoye & Kanyoro (1992) writes,

African women theologians have come to realize that as long as men and foreign researchers remain the authorities on culture, rituals and religion, African women will continue to be spoken of as if they were dead (p.1).

This realisation by female theologians/scholars on the continent motivated them to start looking for ways in which their voices could be heard and liberation attained from patriarchal subjugation. It is, therefore, not surprising when Phiri (2004) explains that the desire to be heard yielded its first important result in the year 1984. This freedom came in the form of three conferences organised in 1984 in South Africa to mobilise women to discover their voices in the fight against cultural subjugation. The first two conferences were organised by the Institute of Contextual Theology and the third one was organised by the Institute of Theological Research of the University of South Africa. Participants of these conferences noticed that there were little or no publications by women in the theological circles, which made it difficult for the voices and experiences of women in the church and community to be heard.

This later led to the formation of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians by Mercy Amba Oduyoye in 1989. Oduyoye reacted to the lack of female presence on the continent in terms of publication by first

setting up an organising committee at an EATWOT (Ecumenical Association of Third World Theology) Conference in Geneva 1988 (Hinga, 2002). Hinga explains that this committee has been generally referred to as the “International Planning Committee” because they were made up of eight women from different countries on the African continent. It was the work of this committee that gave shape to the vision of Oduyoye to form a group that would actually cater for the interest of women on the African continent. The work of the committee led to the discovery that religion and culture were major contributors to the suffering of women on the continent. They, therefore, convened a meeting in 1989 that subsequently led to the formation of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (simply referred to as ‘Circle’).

The Circle’s inaugural meeting was made up of eighty women who felt suffocated by the description given to women by men on the continent in the name of doing theology. Hinga (2002) describes the situation before the formation of the Circle as being dominated by males to the complete disregard for issues that concerned women. Hinga (2002) cites Oduyoye, who argues,

For many years African women had been treated as if they were dead. They had been discussed and spoken about and on behalf of by men and outsiders as if they were not subjects capable of self-naming analysis of their own experiences (p. 80).

The feeling of being silenced for too long a time was what motivated these eighty women to resolve to go above the state of apathy that has arisen as a result of years of imposed silence. These women, therefore, decided to undertake sustained research, make analysis and publish their research on the

impact of religion and culture in their lives on the continent so that their voices could be heard (Hinga 2002). They observed that religion and culture are central in shaping African women's experiences for good or evil and so, they embarked on what feminists elsewhere call "hermeneutics of suspicion" (Hinga, 2002, p. 80).

At the conference, the women of the circle decided to undertake a seven year cycle of sustained analysis of religion and culture with several specific objectives in mind. These objectives are listed as follows:

- a. To encourage and empower the critical study of the practice of religion in Africa
- b. To undertake research that unveils both positive and negative religio-cultural factors
- c. To publish theological literature written by African women with special focus on religion and culture
- d. To build communication networks among theologically trained women both in academia and beyond
- e. To promote a dialogic approach to religious and cultural tensions in Africa
- f. To strive toward the inclusion of women's studies in religion and culture in academia and research institutions in Africa, particularly institutions of higher education including theological institutions
- g. To empower African women to contribute to the cross-cultural discourse on women's issues through engagement in critical cultural hermeneutics.
- h. To promote ecumenism and cultural pluralism

- i. To bring African women's theology to the attention of the general public

(Hinga, 2002, pp.80-81).

A careful study of these objectives points to the Circle's determination to end the years of suppression of women on the continent through the publication of research on the problems facing women on the continent. They desired to bring to the public unfair conditions that affect women as a result of culture and religion through research, writing and publication. Thus through this engagement, they strived to end years of women's suppression on the continent. The Circle's main aim was to encourage women from different backgrounds in Africa to write about issues concerning them. They wanted these women whether having a white or black background, to write on issues that bothered them without feeling intimidated by the other (Hinga, 2002). This is because they wanted the voices of women on the continent to be heard and felt through their publication and activities. Out of the main theme of religion and culture, four subthemes were deduced to guide and provide some nuance to the overall goal. These subthemes are:

- a. Women in the context of cultural pluralism
- b. The history and agency of African women in religion.
- c. Biblical and cultural hermeneutics
- d. Issues in the theological and ministerial formation of African women

(Hinga, 2002, p.81)

One clear thing that can be deduced from both the seven year objective and the subsequent sub-themes is that they all point to the desire to bring to the fore issues about women which need to be addressed.

Hinga (2002) further explains that, from that time onwards, the activities of the Circle have covered a wide range of issues that bedevilled women on the continent. Their conferences always carry themes that are of concern to women and will subsequently benefit women on the continent. Due to their (Circle) desire to conduct a holistic theology that is not preoccupied with theories, the Circle encouraged women to research on issues that concerned their daily life challenges and life threatening issues (Hinga, 2002).

One of such conferences was the 2nd Pan-African congress held in Nairobi, Kenya in 1996. The theme of this meeting was “Transforming Power: Women in the Household of God” (Hinga, 2002). The women who presented papers at this conference defined power with multiple nuances which included political power. They, then, went ahead to describe the African woman in relation to having power and not having it. Women at this conference also came to the realisation that “there was the need to transform power so that it could be useful and transformative to women” (Hinga, 2002, p. 82).

The Circle also had a unique way of doing theology which did not end with the publication of their research but rather creation of platforms where these discoveries could be acted out. Hinga (2002) describes these aspects of doing theology by the members of the Circle as being born out of “the challenge to act out ... their self naming not merely as objects and victims of injustice but also as moral agents capable of moral action for social transformation” (p.83). This is because they felt that, for years, they have been sidelined to remain dormant doing nothing and, therefore, decided that for African women, doing theology went beyond research and publication. It

included finding ways of helping women overcome their problems using the solutions the research proffered.

Subsequently the response to this action plan of the Circle is what has led majority of women belonging to this group to undertake and develop cultural methodologies that address specific interests of women as influenced by religion and culture in their own context. The call for African women to develop their own cultural methodologies has been generally referred to as the *Talitha Cumi* hermeneutics which was named after the story in Mark 5:41 about Jarius daughter. *Talitha Cumi* which simply means ‘little girl rise up’ was adopted by the Circle at their first conference to reflect the call to African women to rise up and let the whole continent, and beyond, hear their voices (Phiri, 2004; Hinga, 2002).

Some African women in response to the call by the *Talitha Cumi* Hermeneutics sometimes “picked existing branches of African Biblical Hermeneutics such as Inculturation and Post colonialism and gave it a feminist angle” (Nkabala, 2013, p. 391). On the other hand, some developed their own cultural methodology based on their own unique context. Some of these scholars who have developed their own are Oduyoye (Inculturated feminist hermeneutics), Musa Dube (Postcolonial biblical hermeneutics), Teresa Okure (Hermeneutics of life) and finally, Masenya (*Bosadi* hermeneutics) whose work has profoundly influenced me in this thesis (Nkabala, 2013). The “*Bosadi*” (Womanhood) hermeneutics developed by Masenya has the ‘African-South African’ woman as the focus and her culture as the context. Masenya as cited by (Nkabala, 2013, p. 393), explain the *Bosadi* hermeneutics as:

... an African liberation reading of the text which take into account the African-ness of an African woman and her attributes. The *Bosadi* approach include poverty, sexism, racism, foreignness, classism, family, suffering and African cultural practices vis-a vis the African woman's social status.

The context of the 'Africa-South African woman' together with all the conditions cited by Nkabala (2013) above remains the focus of this approach. Masenya (1998) goes further to define her reader as one who, for a long period of time suffered rejection from the South African public life because of her skin. She highlights what a *Bosadi* reader seeks when reading a text.

- a) The first step is the context of the reader which she describes as mostly being racist, classism and post-apartheid. The identification of the context then leads to a re-reading of the text to identify problematic elements so as to provide better meaning to the reader.
- b) She argues that the *Bosadi* reader also looks out for those who are treated as foreign (people regarded as not being part of the selected group) in the text since African-South African women have suffered this condition most of their life.
- c) Thirdly, the approach looks for semblance between the African context and the Old Testament which can be used to empower the lives of women today as and when necessary. The approach further acknowledges the important role faith plays in the life of African women and her encounter with the Bible. Masenya (1998) argues that "African women mostly view the Bible as

the word of God capable of transforming life and addressing different life situations...” (p. 278). Due to the reliance on the Bible by most women, the approach is very critical of the Bible in order not to fall in the trap of endorsing everything the Bible says. Hence the culture in the Bible and that of the African is scrutinized in order to criticize those in both context that suppresses women and encourage those in both context that support women.

Masenya’s Bosadi hermeneutics is therefore:

...an African woman’s effort towards redefining and renaming herself and her fellow women, equipping them with an ability to call themselves in their own names and saying what they want to say in biblical interpretation by their own voices (Nkabala, 2013, p. 393).

It is out of this background that I argue that once a woman is able to identify her context, she can read a text to liberate herself and other women from unfair patriarchal laws. Though Masenya’s approach has the needs of the woman as her focus, it is quite clear that the approach is designed for women in South Africa who have experienced apartheid. This means that experiences of these women in South Africa are quite different from that of the Ghanaian daughter who has not gone through such a system of governance. Yet, I agree with Masenya on the importance of context (both the Old Testament and the Ghanaian) to the approach taken to a text and the meaning drawn from it (text). It is from this background that I propose a Ghanaian feminist reading which seeks to read biblical texts from the perspective of Ghanaian daughters who cannot inherit because of discriminatory customary laws. I call it a

Ghanaian feminist reading because its context is Ghana and the intent of the reading is to help young women overcome traditional laws that suppress them as they struggle to obtain freedom from constant male dominance.

This approach differs slightly from Masenya's approach not only in terms of context but in terms of the adoption of the lenses of advocacy when approaching biblical texts. Gender advocacy in this context remain an important tool that daughters can use to stand up for themselves, and encourage other women to also stand for themselves.

These young women, through their voices, work to gain the attention of those in authority to take a re-look at some customary laws, policies and attitudes which negatively affect the self development of women. They are, therefore, gender advocates who are interested in the cause of women and so will rely on anyone, including elderly women and men who have power in the community or society to hear their case and cause a change in their situation.

Ghanaian Feminist Hermeneutics

The discussions above have shown the challenges that early feminist scholars faced and how the struggle further led to the understanding of each one's unique capabilities and experiences. Thus, Kwok-Pui-lan (1993) (as cited by Masenya, 1995) intimates, "Feminist theorists have clearly demonstrated that women's experience is not determined by female biology alone but is largely shaped by powerful cultural and social forces" (p. 153). In other words, there is no such thing as "universal women's experience". It can be reiterated that many factors (social, political, economic and cultural) influence the way a woman is affected by the rules of patriarchy.

The argument being made here clearly supports the belief that women's experiences can never be the same due to the differences in language, culture and geographical location (Mbuwayesango, 2014). Therefore, if it is the different experiences that influence the difference in feminist ideologies, then, it is not out of place for us to have a Ghanaian feminist hermeneutics which will concentrate on daughters who are denied inheritance due to abusive customary laws. This approach would pay close attention to the context and culture of the community of readers I represent. I am not the first Ghanaian to have proposed an approach that lay special emphasis on the Ghanaian culture and context. Scholars like Mercy Amba Oduyoye, Elizabeth Amoah and Dorothy B. E. A. Akoto-Abutiate who are Ghanaians all have works that seem to pay close attention to the Ghanaian culture and context. Prominent among the Ghanaian women is Oduyoye and her contribution to the creation and development of the Circle of Concerned African women Theologians.

Though Oduyoye's work is mostly situated in Africa, it also serves as the genesis of feminist research into the Bible in Ghana. This is because she is first a Ghanaian and her efforts together with other women on the continent led to the first conference of the Circle which took place in Ghana. Her contribution can be considered as opening up the way for feminist biblical hermeneutics in Ghana and not just feminist theology in Africa. For her research ought to liberate the Ghanaian woman from oppressive religious and cultural norms. Oduyoye and Amoah, especially, have encouraged Ghanaian women and the women on the African continent to name and denounce

cultural and religious practices that suppress them. This therefore, places their work within the framework of feminist biblical hermeneutics in Africa.

Oduyoye and Amoah have made tremendous contributions to feminist studies in Ghana but they are not the only ones to have done this. As in other parts of the world, there are males who support women to denounce aspects of society that work against them. Thus, it is not only women who can fight against discriminatory cultural, social and religious practices but anyone who understands that these practices work against women and denounces it, can be viewed as feminist, in spite of the sex of the person. In some instances too, we have men in academia and society whose works and research focus on the needs of women.

In Ghana, we have scholars like Martey (1998) and Ntreh (1998) who are males but have conducted research on how religion and culture have silenced women on the continent. Both scholars had their respective research published by the West African Association of Theological Institutions as papers at a conference by the above institution on July 28th-3rd August 1996 on the theme *Women, Culture and Theological Education*. The papers addressed issues of concern to women. The title of the articles were “Women and culture in contemporary Africa” by Martey and “A feminist reading of Numbers 27:1-11; Judges 11:1-40 and Mark 5: 25-34” by Ntreh respectively. In these articles, both scholars raised the issue of how culture has drastically contributed to the woes of women in Africa but argued that, with the help of their male counterparts, some remedies could be prescribed to alleviate the damage caused.

These articles and contributions from other males on the continent go to confirm the argument by Okure (1999), Oduyoye (2000) and others who believe that African feminism is unique since it is not in contention with males but, rather, seek male support in their struggle. This is because gender stereotype which is a child of culture in our society place limitations on each gender and, hence, pressurises the individual to act in a way that she/he may not agree (Oduyoye, 2000).

A clear example is a popular Akan adage which says: *Barima nsu*, (a man does not cry) or to interpret it, real men do not show their emotions (whether sadness or happiness) in public. Due to this, any man seen crying in public is usually branded as a “woman” (weak and lack self-control). This places a lot of pressure on men to suppress their emotions. The description given to the man who shows emotion (weak and lacking self-control) also portrays the biased nature of our language and shows the extent to which our society has bracketed the woman into a box and denied her voice and freedom. This and many others in our culture show how culture has contributed to the suppression of the Ghanaian woman and man.

It is out of this background that I have come to believe that the Ghanaian woman can also read the Bible with her context in mind by paying closer attention to the Bible on one hand and her context on the other. What makes Ghanaian feminist reading different is the context and the kind of people who make up the group I represent. The group is made of daughters (married/unmarried) who due to customary laws cannot inherit their fathers. This group is made up of women who are not favoured by either the patrilineal or the matrilineal system of inheritance that is practiced in Ghana.

This approach is influenced by Masenya's *Bosadi* hermeneutics which pays close attention to the context of her people with special emphasis on their post-apartheid experience and the Old Testament context.

The Ghanaian feminist approach defines the context of daughters who cannot inherit their fathers because of the system of inheritance practiced in Ghana. The matrilineal system of inheritance appears to favour women when it comes to inheritance of land and properties. However, the role of the *Abusuapanyin* who is always a male and the final authority in the family when it comes to how family lands are shared or used places limitations on the power of women in the matrilineal society.

The situation of this group (Ghanaian daughters who cannot inherit) is likened to that of the daughters of Zelophehad who came to meet an inheritance tradition that does not recognise daughters but sought a way to get recognised. The tool they use is advocacy, a powerful tool which they believe can help them gain attention and, eventually, foster the change they desire. Subsequently, I take a cue from Masenya (1995) who argues that:

...though the biblical texts can be oppressive towards women, and though they have been subjected to male biased interpretations, they contain if read critically and creatively liberative elements for oppressed women including African women (p. 154).

She further states that:

A key to Womanist hermeneutics and any other hermeneutics for that matter is that the text in order to be liberative or comforting must be read from the individual's eyes and not through Eurocentric or any other eyes (Masenya, 1995, p. 155).

What makes the Ghanaian feminist reader (daughters who cannot inherit) different from Masenya's *Bosadi* reader is that these young women choose as their tool advocacy. It serves as a way to initiate dialogue between those in authority in order to bring about the needed change. Advocacy will therefore, serve as the tool to bring about some changes to some of the issues affecting young women in Ghana. I believe that the creation of awareness which is one of the strategies of advocacy will go a long way to conscientise a lot of young women about what society and culture does to their self-image and mentality, which they are not even aware of. This will be done through the following steps:

- Define the reader doing the reading. It is necessary to describe the background of the reader so that the experiences of the reader that is bound to affect the reading will be properly established.
- Define the context of the text, paying close attention to the social, religious and cultural situation that is negatively affecting the woman/women in the text. The context will also influence the kind of advocacy strategy that the reader will adopt in the reading process
- Establish whether the text has issues of discrimination against women. Here the reader establishes whether the text is about women and portray the various images of women that can be deduced from the reading, whether negative or positive
- Use the strategies employed by gender advocates to read the text paying close attention to how women handle the suppressive elements in the text. The reading must deduce the steps women took to liberate themselves. If the women did not liberate themselves in the text then,

the reading must point out how women could have acted in that situation to liberate themselves. This is to help discover how women spoke out in a given situation to cause the change desired.

The Ghanaian feminist approach falls within the confines of liberationist feminism in the Bible which seeks to use biblical texts to liberate young African women from societal structures that suppress them using the principles inherent in gender-advocacy.

Context of the reader

The researcher is a Ghanaian who comes from the Akan ethnic group. She thus belongs to the matrilineal system of inheritance. Manuh (1997) describes the matrilineal system of inheritance as system where:

“members are united by the possession of common blood (*mogya*). In the matrilineal family (the *abusua*) the blood passes exclusively through the female line and the typical family is made up of a woman, her uterine sisters and brothers, her children (both males and females), her sisters’ children and so on” (p. 79).

The Akan inheritance and succession system stipulates that property and status are transferred from the mother’s brother to sister’s son. “By definition, neither the wife nor children of an Akan male belong to his family...” (Manuh, 1997, p. 80). One striking thing about this is that, even for the matrilineal system of inheritance which supposedly confers inheritance rights to women, still, mandates men to control the system (Gyekye, 1998; Rattray, 1955). In actual effect “...the identity and autonomy of women fare not much better today under the matrilineal systems of Akan group than under the overt patriarchies in Southern Nigeria... (Oduyoye, 1995, pp.79-80).

The role of the ‘wɔfa’ (uncle) and ‘wɔfase’ (nephew and the sister’s son) who are all males cannot be overlooked. The question the researcher has is “where are the daughters in this situation”? It seems that the women carry the power in name but it is the men who really own the power to act. The interesting aspect is that the sister’s son (who is in this case the father) in the matrilineal system of inheritance cannot transfer property to his own children (both males and females) (Dolphyne, 2008).

Though the context of the researcher and the narratives on the daughters of Zelophehad (in Numbers 27:1-11; 36 and Joshua 17:1-6) is centuries apart, they are still bonded together by their lack of right to inherit their fathers. They both cannot be permitted due to the machinations of the system of inheritance their fathers belong to. Dolphyne (2008) posits that there are situations that make it difficult for children to inherit both parents. This is when the father belongs to a matrilineal system of inheritance while the mother belongs to a patrilineal system of inheritance.

Women in the matrilineal system can own land and other property because they maintain inheritance in their own kin groups. However, women’s property in land and farms has always been less than that of males because men tend to be given priority in inheriting lineage property (Kuenyehia, 2006). Consequently, women have greater difficulty generating the resources necessary to activate their right to property and ownership and control (Manuh, 1997).

Conclusion

This chapter has traced the struggles of women from the 1840s to date. The aim was to bring to light the struggles and difficulties women faced in

their bid to gain the level of independence that women today are enjoying. The struggle began with protest, dialogue and other kinds of avenues to help put the grievances of women to the world.

It also portrayed how the drive for recognition in the society showed the role biblical interpretation has played in the subjugation of women. This led to the rise of women theologians who sought to re-read the Bible to counteract the androcentric interpretations that have been given to the Bible. Hence, while the secular struggle for political, social and economic integrity was going on globally, theologians also joined the fight to denounce negative interpretations of the Bible. The struggle also led to the rise of different wings of feminism to address the issues on race, class and sexism. This new awareness that came from the general struggle further influenced Africans who received education in Europe and the West to understand the role male interpretations of the Bible continue to negatively affect the lives of African women. Thus, out of this, various methodologies were formed to liberate the African woman from the entanglements of religion and culture. This is because, during the struggle, feminist theologians and biblical scholars discovered that not only were the interpretation biased and androcentric but the Bible itself was very bias towards women thus eliciting different feminist methodologies to re-read the Bible. These methodologies sought to denounce abuse of women and praise the contribution of women in the Bible respectively.

One of the things that helped women to make positive progress in their struggle is education. Education of women in the West, Europe and Africa at different stages in the struggle exposed the women to the extent to

which patriarchy and its abusive mechanism have suppressed women over a long period of time. The education also enlightened women to arrive at the conclusion that the only way women can really be emancipated is when they take up the mantle to name and describe their own experiences (Oduyoye, 1998; Okure, 1999).

It can also be deduced from the discussions above that the struggle did not only lead to improved conditions of women but also opened their understanding to the opportunities out there, which, for so long, was hidden from them by males.

The creation of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians was and still remains a turning point in the feminist struggle in Africa since, until then, issues concerning women were mostly overlooked and regarded as insignificant. The creation of the Circle emboldened most women (both educated and non-educated) to research, publish and speak out concerning their experiences with religion and culture. The challenge thrown by the Circle to African women is what I have responded to by discussing the issues that came out of the reading of Numbers 27:1-11; 36 and Joshua 17:1-6 from the perspectives of daughters who due to traditional customary laws cannot inherit their fathers in chapter five.

Though Akans and most traditions in Ghana regard many unmarried young women as unwise and, therefore, in need of constant shepherding by their elders, I believe young Christian women who read the Bible can learn from the daughters of Zelophehad; who overcame their cultural boundaries to gain economic freedom (land).

Subsequently, the next chapter will read the narratives of Zelophehad from the perspective of gender advocacy to deduce the strategies that helped the daughters achieve their goal. This is because the method reader-response criticism allows the reader to define herself; which in this thesis is an advocate who is influenced by the ideals of liberationist feminism. The issues that will be generated from the reading will then be interrogated from the perspective of the Ghanaian daughter so that lessons that will be suitable for addressing policies and perceptions that negatively affect women in the Ghanaian context could be drawn from the reading.

CHAPTER FOUR

EXEGESIS OF NUMBERS 27:1-11; 36:1-13 & JOSHUA 17:1-6

Introduction

This chapter is an exegesis of Numbers 27:1-11; 36:1-13 and Joshua 17:1-6. The method used for the exegesis is Reader-response criticism from the perspective of a feminist gender advocate. One of the basic assumptions in this method that will influence the reading is that meaning is gained when there is an interaction between the reader and the text (Fowler, 2008). Scholars of this method argue that a text is nothing until a reader picks it and reads it. During the reading process, the reader performs the function of filling the gaps that are left in the text by the narrator and, in so doing, looks back and forward to review and anticipate issues in the text (Fowler, 2008). Reader-response method though does not clearly stipulate steps to follow when conducting the reading; but the reader can follow these steps to make the reading logical. First, identify the genre of literature that the reader is interpreting, establish the pericope of the text and provide the structure for the reading. The exegesis will also deal with words, sentences and semantic presentation of the text before proceeding to the perspective of the reader as she interprets the text.

The framework which guided this exegesis is the principles which underlie a successful advocacy. Advocacy, in this thesis, has been explained as the deliberate speaking up about a problem in the relevant political arena in

order to improve the situation of the people affected by the problem (Poudel and Luintel, 2003).

Chapter four is divided into three parts. First, the pericope of the texts are established followed by the structure of the text which is influenced by the strategies used by gender advocates. Second, the exegesis of the text will be done starting with Numbers 27:1-11; 36:1-13 and later Joshua 17:1-6 respectively. Finally, a summary of the reading highlighting issues that arose during the exegesis.

Pericope

The chosen texts for this thesis are Numbers 27:1-11, 36:1-13 and Joshua 17:1-6 which cover the narratives on the daughters of Zelophehad. Pericope is the complete text in a narrative reading. The text must have a clear beginning and end; that is, the issue raised at the beginning of a text must be followed through to the end. Numbers 26 ends with the second census which was undertaken by Moses in the wilderness while Numbers 27:1-11 is about the daughters of Zelophehad's bid to inherit their father. Subsequently, Numbers 27:12 also introduces a new story which involves Joshua's succession to Moses. So, that leaves verse 12 of Numbers 27 out of our pericope. Interestingly after eight chapters the issue of the daughters of Zelophehad is raised again in chapter 36 of the book of Numbers. This second part explains the difficulties that arise when daughters who can inherit marry. Finally, the issue of the daughters is brought to an end in Joshua 17:1-6 when the daughters finally gained their inheritance.

Structure of Numbers 27:1-11

Though Numbers 27:1-11 and 36 are separated by other texts, these two chapters are bonded by the issue of inheritance by the daughters of Zelophehad. Ursula Rapp (2012) handles this issue perfectly when she argues that: “Numbers 27 and 36 are connected because both cases deal with the right of daughters to inherit and, in this case, the daughters of Zelophehad” (p.78). Thus, the reading is divided into three main parts namely, Daughters’ Request (Numbers 27:1-11), Elders’ Request (Numbers 36:1-13) and Daughters Demand (Joshua 17:1-6).

Numbers 27:1-11 have been structured differently by scholars due to the different methods they have used in reading the text. Milgrom (1990), Ashley (1993) and Levine (2008) all divide Numbers 27: 1-11 into two but different parts. While Milgrom (1990) structures Numbers 27: 1-11 as: Vs. 1-7 and 8-11, Ashley structures the same narrative as: Vs. 1-4 and 5-11, and Levine divides it as: Vs 1-5 and 6-11. Sakenfeld (1995) on the other hand divides Numbers 27: 1-11 into three main parts namely: Vs 1-4, 5-7 and 8-11. Sakenfeld and Ashley agree on placing the first four verses into one division under the structure but disagree on the rest. It is interesting since all three scholars (Milgrom, Levine and Ashley) divide the text into two main parts, but differed on the verses where the actual division should begin. The choice of the scholars, however, reflect the approach they used and the meaning they derive from the text.

Due to this, I also select a different structure from the ones used by scholars discussed above. My structure is different because it is tailored along the lines of the steps individuals and organisations need to take when they

decide to embark on a successful advocacy. Since I believe that what the daughters did agrees with advocacy (the modern name for influencing those in authority to change a defective policy or law). Hence, the structure of the reading is modeled after some of the strategies/steps mostly prescribed by gender advocates to ensure success in the policy or law they seek to reform or change.

The reading will follow this structure:

Section A: Request by the Daughters

1. Strategizing : Numbers 27:1-2
2. stating the problem Vs. 3-4
3. Deliberation on the problem: Vs. 5-6
4. Verdict: Vs. 7-11

A Reading of Numbers 27:1-11

Strategizing: Numbers 27:1-2

The narrative begins with the daughters taking a step or initiating an action to achieve their goal. Poudel and Luintel (2003) posit that advocacy involves speaking up about an issue in order to influence those in power to bring about transformation. This means the individual or group must act out their intention. Silence and inactivity, in this case, do not help in achieving the desired objectives. The daughters had an objective and so, they took the first step to achieve this objective. They initiated an action which would later cause a revolution for unmarried women's position for inheritance. The Hebrew verb *brq* "to approach, come forward," as used in the narrative connotes an action, an initiative which is the first step to be taken by an advocate. Numbers 27:1 reads:

hVnm-!Brykm-!B d[lG-!B rpx-!B dxplc twNB
hnbrqTw

hlgxw h[n hlxm wytnB twmv hLaw @sy-!b hVnm
txoPvml

hcrtw hKlmW (*and approached daughters of Selophehad son of Hephher, son of Gilead, son of Machir, son of Manasseh to the clan of Manasseh son of Joseph and these are the names of his daughters Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Malcah and Tirzah*)

The narrative begins by giving clues regarding who the narrative is about. For the daughters to be presented as the subject of the Hebrew verb *brq* translated approach, draw near or come forward by the Hebrew and Aramaic Lexion (HAL) is very significant. The verb *brq* as used in the narrative is a waw consecutive imperfect 3rd person feminine plural. It is also in the *qal* form which is an active verb thus connoting an action. Here, the verb is pointing to the daughters as subjects, that is the ones the narrative is about, and also the ones who have taken an initiative. The narrator gives three clues to confirm the daughters as subjects of the narrative.

The first clue is that the verb *brq* is used in the feminine plural sense which points to an act made by the five women and not any male figure.

The second clue is that the daughters have their names mentioned unlike the usual Hebrew narratives where they would simply be referred to as daughters of Zelophehad. All five women are mentioned not in relation to being daughters of a man but as individuals, bearing names and, therefore, given identities right from the onset of the narrative. Sakenfeld (1995), on this

same issue, remarks that: “since so many women mentioned in the OT are known only as daughter or wife of a certain named male, it is noteworthy that the names of these five women are listed in full not only here but also in 26:33; 36:11 and Josh. 17:3” (p. 49).

The third clue that points to the daughters of Zelophehad as subjects of the narrative is the genealogy of the daughters listed by the narrator. Dennis Oslon (1996) explains that the story about the genealogy is rooted in the early times in Israel’s history when it played the role of connecting diverse tribes without any central administration in the form of kingship. “Genealogical ties also serve social purposes, particularly in establishing relationships between individuals. By citing one’s genealogical line, it is possible to see how that person is linked to other individuals in a given group” (Mbiti, 1969, p. 103). The narrator’s use of the genealogy points to his desire to give the daughters the legitimacy to be present before the people gathered.

The names and ancestry indicates the narrator’s interest in identifying the daughters as Israelites, originating from the house of Joseph and therefore, descendants of the twelve tribe descent of the Israelites. The legitimacy that the narrator gives to the daughters explain the subsequent demand the daughters made to Moses and the Elders since they were also Israelites entitled to inheritance. Further, Levine (2008) argues that the detailed mention of the names of the daughters cannot be simply overlooked because:

...The name of Zelophehad, especially the names of his daughters, warrant special attention... It is, however, only in the present context of the suit brought by the daughters of Zelophehad that the full significance of their names becomes apparent... Some of the clan

names listed in the priestly genealogy of Manasseh are attested in the Samaria Ostraca of the eighth century B.C.E., but as the names of districts in the region of Samaria, not as personal names. Thus, Hoglah and Noah, two of Zelophehad's daughters, are listed as the names of districts or towns in Samaria. ...It indicates that the legal innovation associated with the family of Zelophehad must be understood in the context of the plan for the settlement of Canaan...(p. 344).

Levine's (2008) argument above actually points to the fact that the names of the daughters existed as territories in Canaan; therefore, try to show the historicity of this narrative. However, the historicity or otherwise is not the focus of this reading since the approach being employed here does not lay much emphasis on the history behind a text.

The reader also notes that since this text is part of the formulation of a law on the inheritance of daughters, the legal rights of these women had to be established, and that, to some extent was what initiated the genealogy by the narrator. This, therefore, prepares the ground as to what is to follow. The narrator after identifying the daughters and their legal rights, moves swiftly to the strategy the daughters used in laying out their problem which explains their initial action.

The second verse begins with a phrase $\text{np} \text{ldm} [$ which literally means "stand in face of or stand before". The verb $\text{dm} [$ (stand or take ones stand) is qal active verb connoting an action taken by the subjects of the sentence. It means to make ones mind to perform a task or to stand before a crowd or group of people to perform a task. Here too, as in the first verse, the daughters are chosen as subject of the verb by the narrator. They therefore,

‘approached’ and ‘stood before’ an audience to state a claim. Levine (2008) explains that:

The idiomatic verb *‘amad lipnê* “to stand before” usually connotes the formal stance of those appearing before God to await his judgment (Num 35:12, Deut 19:17), or of those who serve or worship him (Jer 7:10). It also designates those who stand in attendance or service before one in authority (Gen 41:46, Judge 20:28, 2 Kings 5:16, Zech 3:4, and cf. 1 Kings 22:19) (p. 344).

The choice of phrase raises a lot of questions. Why were they standing there? Were they in some kind of trouble or they simply wanted to gain attention from the people present? The reader therefore pictures the daughters as they approached Moses in the midst of all the people to speak.

Numbers 27:2 reads:

~ayfNh ynplw !hKh rz[la ynplw hvm ynpl
hndmo [Tw

rma l d[w m-lha xtP hd[h-lkw

(And they stood before Moses and before Eleazer the priest and before the chieftains and whole of the assembly at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting to say...)

Before we proceed to understand the import of the narrative, Poudel and Luintel (2003) explain that every successful advocacy needs support from allies and partners. They explain that in order to gain this important support, advocates must have strategies that target these allies so as to gain their attention and subsequent help in effecting the desired change. The daughters seem to have had this in mind when they chose the place, time and audience in

presenting their claim. By appearing before this assembly, the reader deduces that these young women knew the important role each member of the assembly played among the Israelites. Now, to the narrative, the narrator lists those who make up the audience and they are Moses, Eleazar the priest, the chieftains and all the assembly. What then is the role of each member of the assembly in the governance of the Israelites during the exodus?

Moses was chosen by Yahweh to lead the Israelites out of captivity in Egypt and by default, he became the spokesman of Yahweh to the people. De Vaux (1965), on this issue, explains that "...in the desert, the Israelites turned to Moses "to consult God"... he kept for himself the task of taking the people's quarrels before God (Exo. 18:19)" (p. 349). In other words, Moses served as the link between the people and Yahweh. Thus, Moses was revered by the people and could, therefore, not be bypassed in an attempt to effect a change in a defective law. Further, Moses' role also gave him the special privilege of interacting with God face to face; a privilege which even the priest did not enjoy (Exo 31:18; 33:7-1). Thus, the daughters knew that Moses was a potential ally in their plan.

Another authority identified in verse 2 is the Priest Eleazer. The Priest was someone who was "chosen and installed to serve in a sanctuary" (De Vaux, 1965, p. 348) which was commonly referred to as Tent of Meeting during the wilderness period. He was also an important figure who according to Pederson (1926), "is the father of the cultic community which he is the head" (p. 63). Thus, the Priest led the people during worship and directed them in the performance of all sacrifices and rituals needed during worship. In Numbers 4:5, we hear of the Priests being responsible for guarding and

carrying the Tent which served as the people's sanctuary. Thus, Moses and the Priest (who was in this case Eleazer) who were part of the daughter's audience are strategically targeted individuals through whom the daughters could attain maximum impact with their request.

The next group in the daughters' audience is $\sim a f N h$ (translated as chieftain or clan head or tribal chieftains). Hence, the third group is made up of what Pedersen (1926) describes as "grown up men of the powerful families who have the power to rule, serve as witnesses with a co-responsibility of ensuring the legality of all transactions" (pp. 35-37). Milgrom (1990) also affirms that this group can commonly be referred to as "chieftains or clan heads" (p. 334); people who usually stand as leaders of an entire tribe. To cement his argument further, Milgrom (1990) compares the name list of the chieftains in the book of Numbers that is, those who supervised the census (in chapter 1:5-16) with those who brought dedicatory gifts to the tabernacle (in chapter 7) and concludes that they are identical with those who led the tribes in war and therefore, served the function of both national and tribal leaders. Consequently, he postulates that: "they are clan elders; yet they also act in an extended executive capacity on behalf of the $h d l$ (Milgrom, 1990, pp. 333-334).

The chieftains at the gathering were, therefore, likely to be "the heads of the various tribes who saw to the day to day needs of the people" (Milgrom, 1990, p. 334). However, as and when the need arises, difficult cases are then referred to Moses for his intervention. This idea agrees with the decision of Moses to appoint some elders to assist him since the task of leadership was

overwhelming. Thus, this group also wielded power, which the daughters could not ignore if they were to achieve their aim.

The fourth group they chose is $\text{h}\bar{\text{d}}[\text{h}-\text{lkw}$ (and all the congregation/witness) which has also been translated as congregation. They were to serve as important witnesses in this judicial suit. Milgrom (1990) opines:

The term *'edah* represents all the Israelites, the adult males, or the chieftains. It constitutes a national political body vested with legislative and judicial powers; when it is made up of only the chieftains it exercises executive powers as well. Thus the *'edah* brings to trial and punishes violators of the covenant, be they individuals (e.g., Num. 35:12, 24–25), cities, or tribes (e.g., Josh. 22:16; Judg. 21:10). It also crowns kings (1 Kings 12:20) and even reprimands its own leaders (Josh. 9:18–19) (p. 334).

Milgrom's explanation shows why the daughter's needed to have the support of this group. Why were all these people gathered and for what reason had they gathered? The Hebrew word $\text{h}\bar{\text{d}}[\text{h}$ is a feminine singular noun which is sometimes rendered as ("testimony" or "witness") but will be translated as witness in this work. This is because the interpretation of $\text{h}\bar{\text{d}}[\text{h}$ as witness in this work supports the role they are to play in the narrative. They were to serve as witnesses to the historical event that was about to take place. Witnesses are important components of advocacy and so the reader can appreciate why the daughters wanted to win the sympathy of this important group of people in the wilderness community.

It must be stated here that this witness could both play a positive and negative role in the cause of the daughters. They could easily be moved to support or impede the women in their fight if they felt the victory of the women would affect their power. However, what can be deduced from the narrative so far is that the daughters deliberately chose to present their case on a day that all these important people were present. This was to help boost the impact that the case will have on the wilderness congregation.

It is also worthy to note that all the people who make up the groups mentioned so far are men. There is no mention of women being part of this group, causing the reader to wonder whether these men would support the course of the women.

The last to be mentioned, *d[m-lha* (translated as Tent of appointed time/ place or meeting by The Complete Word Study Dictionary (2003)) serve as the setting for the Daughters' Request. The setting is very significant in every narrative and should have come first. However, the fact that it is mentioned last does not belittle its role in the narrative. The Tent served as the sanctuary of the Israelites during their wanderings in the wilderness. De Vaux (1965) explains that the:

...Tent is called in Hebrew the *'ōhel mō'ēd*, the Tent of Re-union, or, of Meeting, or of Rendezvous. In fact, it was the place where Yahweh talked with Moses 'face to face' (Ex 33:11), or 'mouth to mouth' (Nb. 12:8). ... everyone who wanted 'to consult Yahweh' went to the Tent, where Moses acted as his spokesman before God (Ex 33:7). ... the Tent of Re-union was the place where Yahweh 'met' Moses and the people of Israel (Ex 29:42-43; 30:36) (pp. 294-295).

De Vaux's explanation means that the Tent of Meeting as used in this work was an important place where the face of God was sought when ever his help was needed. The daughters were aware of the significance of this place and, therefore, chose a time when Moses, Eleazer, the tribal chieftains and the entire congregation were before the Tent to make their landmark request.

The Tent of Meeting literally was the earthly abode of Yahweh among the Israelites and so all decrees, laws and important decisions were taken there in order to ensure their legality and importance (De Vaux, 1965). The choice of the daughters with reference to the Tent connotes two ideas: First, they needed God as witness to the request so that the entire male leadership would not throw out their case and second, nothing legal and binding could take place without it being presented at the Tent. Thus, the reader cannot help but admire the daughters for the meticulous and systematic steps they have undertaken so far in the bid to realise their aim. Per their choice, they did not leave any significant thing out of their preparation. They targeted and captured the attention of those who had the power in the community.

The narrative, at this point, is silent on the presence of women at this august meeting. It, therefore, raises the question whether women were originally permitted to be part of such gathering? If they were, why did the narrator not mention them? If they were also not supposed to be there, why were the daughters allowed to *rmal wbrq* (approach and speak)? Nonetheless, the fact that they were not heckled or thrown out in the narrative suggests that women were probably allowed to speak before this important audience even though they were not part of the group. In fact, a narrative like this is not common in the Pentateuch. Thus, if it was the case that women were

not allowed to be part of the congregation, then we have to admire the daughters for their courage to breach protocol, to not only approach, but stand and present their case to the highest governing body of the Wilderness congregation.

The text continues that the daughters stood before all these important people *rma.l* (to say). The verb *rma.l* is a *qal* active which has been explained as a simple act of communicating by the Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon (HAL) of the Old Testament. The daughters therefore, stood in front of their audience which was made up of male Moses, male Priest, male witnesses and Tent of Meeting (earthly abode of a male God), and delivered their speech. They did not feel intimidated but rather went ahead to seize the golden opportunity to state their case. The reader can deduce the pressure the daughters must have been going through to have taken this bold step to state their concerns. This step could only be taken by women who knew their right and understood the laws of their land. It could be argued that these women were educated in the laws of their land and, therefore, were aware of the gaps in the laws.

Education of women is important since it seems to be the turning point in all feminist struggles since time immemorial. Consequently, women in Ghana need to be educated; especially, on all land laws in the country in order to be successful in their land disputes.

What motivated them to take that important step? It must be an issue that bordered between life and death for anyone to take such a risk. The daughters' life depended on this, so, the reader anticipates they will make good use of the attention they have gained. The next verse presents the

Identification of Problem: Vs. 3-4

One of the primary things Poudel and Lunitel (2003) identify in advocacy is identification of problem. The identification of the problem will subsequently direct the choice of strategy to help solve the problem. Verse 3 of Numbers 27 describes the way the daughters presented their case to Moses and the elders at the gathering. Verse 3 is divided into four main parts to help with the analysis of the text. It reads:

Vs. 3a reads: $\text{rBdMB } \text{tm } \text{nba}$ (*our father died in the wilderness*).

The Hebrew word ba (*father*) is a common masculine singular noun while n (*our*) is a construct suffix denoting the 1st person common plural (Enhanced Brown-Driver Bricks Hebrew Lexicon (BDB)). Thus, the Hebrew word nba (*our father*) is pointing to family lineage between the daughters and the man in whose name they were making their request. He was a father to all five of them, being his heirs and responsibility, but, due to death, he was no more and they (his daughters) needed help. The reader can deduce, from the choice of words, that the daughters wanted to prove to their audience they belonged there and had rights to lay claim to their father's name and property.

The daughters' choice of using their father in the very first verse before this highly male dominated congregation draws the reader's attention to the five women's desire to gain the sympathy of the audience. In essence, they sought to emphasise that they were women without the protection of a father. In ancient Israel, women were always under the protection of their fathers, brothers and, later, their husbands (De Vaux, 1965; Sakenfeld, 1995; Bird, 1997; Mbuwayesango, 2003). Hence, they are either daughters, sisters or wives; for women were never on their own but always under the control of

men. Sterring (2001) highlights that “being a single woman in a patriarchal society meant having to make do without any adequate securities for existence” (p. 91). The daughters of Zelophehad were among a group of women without any protection because they were not married, had lost their father and had no brother.

Therefore, the daughters’ strategy to begin their request by drawing their audience’s attention to their plight is, probably, meant to cause the leaders present to allow them continue to build their case. Readers can realise that these women planned their speech because they first state they were alone without protection due to the death of their father. The lack of male support points to their vulnerability. They then quickly took advantage of the sympathy probably gained with the description of their plight to explain the complex situation that surrounds the death of their father in vs. 3b. Why were they interested in bothering their audience with the cause of death of their father? Can this news help promote their cause?

Vs. 3b: ~ydI [Nh hd[h %tB hyh-al{ ahw (*and he was not in the midst of the witnesses that gathered*)

The Hebrew verb *hyh* (to be) used in the sentence is a qal perfect 3rd masculine singular. This verb can be translated as to be, to become.. it also indicates that something has occurred or come about (The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament).The perfect expresses actions regarded as completed... in the case of stative verbs (verbs expressing mainly a mental or physical condition). Davidson explains that “stative verbs, however, often occur in such a way that their perfect must be rendered by a past tense”(Davidson, 1896, p. 60).

Numbers 3b uses two verbs which both confirm the incidence as one that took place in the past. The Hebrew word *d[ʿy* (to meet with anyone at an appointed place (HAL) is a verb, which is in this case, functions as a Niphal participle to help place the incidence being described in the past. Both Davidson (1896) and Kelly argue that the verb *hyh* when used with a participle, function as a verb that describes an incidence that happened in the past. Hence, the choice of words by Zelophehad's daughters aimed to convince the congregation present that their father and the incidence surrounding his death had taken place already.

Gradually as they build their case, one gets the impression that the daughters are trying to refer to an event that happened in the past and which the people gathered are already aware of. Thus, in order not to confuse the people, they spend time trying to explain the cause of their fathers' death. The successive phrase helps the reader understand the daughters' decision.

They continue their case in verse 3c: *wajxb-yK xrq-td[B hwhy-l[* (*against Yahweh in the congregation of Korah but his sin*) by stating that though their father is dead, he was not part of the men who allied with Korah to rebel against Yahweh. The reader, at this point in the narrative, realises that the narrator expects her to know who Korah is and what led to his death.

Numbers 16 and 17 talk about how Korah, a levite, was able to convince some levites and 250 elders to rebel against Moses and Aaron. They challenged the authority of Moses and so, together with their followers, were killed by God. The daughters disassociated their father's death from Korah and his band because they did not want to be misunderstood for two reasons.

First, they did not want the people present to think that by coming before them, they were challenging Moses's authority as Korah and his allies did. This is because Korah and his band challenged Moses by presenting themselves to the congregation in front of the tent of meeting as the daughters had done. They did not want their action to be associated in any way with that of Korah and his allies.

Secondly, they most importantly, did not want their father and the cause of his death to be associated with the death of these rebels (Numbers 16-17). The question the reader asks then is "why are the daughters so concerned with extricating their fathers' name from Korah and his faction that stood against God? Milgrom (1990) argues that:

... the participants in the Korahite rebellion were denied the right to inherit the land. A similar rule underlies the case of Naboth in 1 Kings 21:10–13. He was (falsely) convicted of blasphemy "against God and the king," and his land was confiscated by the state. Korah and his faction were guilty of a similar charge: They had rebelled against Aaron and Moses who, respectively, represented God and the state (p. 231).

Thus, per Milgrom's argument, the consequence of standing up against Moses and God is death and the loss of your inheritance. The reader then understands why the daughters needed to disassociate their father's death from the Korahite rebellion. But, Sterring (2001) adds a twist to the narrative when he argues that: "the Korahites who were Levites were not entitled to inherit land so where from this idea of being denied inheritance when one rebelled against those in authority" (p. 90). Though it is true that the Levites were not

entitled to own any land, Korah's faction was not made up of only Levites. It was made up of some Levites and 250 elders who were chosen from the Israelite assembly. Therefore, these 250 men probably lost their inheritance as has been raised by Milgrom (1990).

Consequently, rebellion against God and his chosen leaders resulted in death and the loss of one's inheritance like what happened later to Naboth and his family's inheritance in the book of Kings. Naboth was also falsely accused of blaspheming against God and his king, and that led to his death and the loss of his family inheritance. This was the fate the daughters wished to avoid when they disassociated the death of their father from that of Korah and his band of rebels.

However, the question still remains about what might have caused the death of Zelophehad. The daughters move quickly to answer this question. They explain that their father $\tau\text{m } \text{Aa} \dot{\text{j}} \text{x} \text{b} - \text{yK}$ (*yes, he died for his sin*) died for his own sin. Does this mean then that the Korahite band did not die out of their sin? Milgrom(1990) and Levine (2008) both render the Hebrew phrase as

$\tau\text{m } \text{Aa} \dot{\text{j}} \text{x} \text{b} - \text{yK}$ "but or for he died on account/for his own sin", thus, they both agree that he died as a result of a personal sin and not as a result of Korah's rebellion. Milgrom (1990) goes further to explain the death of Zelophehad as not resulting from the punishment meted out to the rebels but one given to the entire nation following the scout episode recorded in Numbers 14:28-35. The incidence in Numbers 14 led to the death of the entire older generation with the exception of Joshua and Caleb. So, this meant that their father's death was not as a result of a personal sin but a sin committed by

the entire older generation. This was, therefore, not a good enough reason to disinherit his relatives. Milgrom (1990), however, still believes that the meaning of this clause is unclear. He argues that:

... even if Zelophehad had been a member of Korah's faction, he still would have "died for his own sin." This objection leads some commentators to connect this phrase with the following... ...claim that this clause only means that Zelophehad did not incite others to sin, that is, he was not one of the leaders in the rebellion (Milgrom, 1990, p.231).

Hence, for Milgrom, and the others, rebelling and inciting others to rebel against Moses and Aaron who were representatives of God are more grievous sins than the punishment meted out to the entire older generation as a result of disobedience. Levine (2008) on this same issue opines that:

... if Zelophehad had, indeed, been one of those devoured by the earth, or consumed by divine fire in the wake of the Korah incident (Numbers 16–17), his name might have been legitimately withdrawn from the register of his tribe, and his lands expropriated. This recalls the law of the *herem*, by which those condemned to death by the judicial process lost title to their estates, which would then be expropriated by the king or the temple. It could be postulated that the lands allotted to members of Korah's *'ēdāh* would likewise have been expropriated after they had been judged and condemned to death by God (p.345).

Consequently, both Milgrom (1990) and Levine (2008) agree that to be condemned to death by God as a result of disobedience to him or his chosen leaders could lead to one's death and loss of inheritance.

This was not the only problem that the daughters were facing. The daughters in the last part of verse three state emphatically what their problem was. Their father died without leaving a son/sons which implied that he left no heirs to inherit him. Ashley (1993) opines, “The norm seems to be that daughters did not inherit land, although the complaint of Laban’s daughters in Gen. 31:14 might indicate that they could have been given a portion had the father desired it.” (p. 544). However, in the case of Zelophehad’s daughters, their father died without leaving any such instruction for them to be allowed to inherit so they had to make a claim for themselves. The daughters in Numbers 27:3 built a solid argument to support their request. Ashley (1993) sums up the entire argument as in:

The daughters began their proposal with a statement of facts. Their father was dead, he had not sided with Korah, and he died leaving no sons. The middle term in this statement is significant to show that Zelophehad had not rebelled against God and Moses as Korah had; that is, he had not committed one of the sins with a high hand. ...This statement was to indicate that the basic inheritance was not encumbered by a disqualifying crime. Zelophehad had *died because of his own sin*, i.e., he was guilty of that which every other member of the Exodus generation was guilty of and had paid the price. Therefore the question was only of the daughters’ suitability as heirs, since he had no sons (p. 545).

It is worthy to note that, in this verse alone, the narrator makes use of repetition, a literary style in narratives. This device is used to help emphasise important points which the narrator wishes to communicate to his reader.

Sterring (2001) posits that "... twice they allude to the death of their father as well as he did not have even a single son" (p. 89). He goes further to point that "thrice, the daughters use the root of the Hebrew word *א* (gather/ assembly) to disassociate him from the rebellious group" (Sterring, 2001, p. 89). The daughters wanted to strongly disassociate their father from the rebellious group. To him, therefore, the repetition takes the focus from the daughters and rather places it at the door step of their father. It is not what they want but rather what will help protect their fathers' name.

However, I disagree with Sterring (2001) on the reason provided for the daughters repetition of their father's death. I aver that, the repetitions highlight the daughters' desire to emphasise their vulnerability created by the absence of their father and a brother, and this was part of the strategy adopted by the daughters to prepare the people to understand and accept their ultimate goal which is to be given land. This strategy was geared towards winning the support and sympathy of some of the people present, especially, those who did not have sons. At this point in the narrative, the reader's mind has been prepared by the narrator as to what to anticipate. However, how do the daughters make themselves eligible to inherit their father since the norm in a patrilineal society did not allow daughters to inherit their fathers (Milgrom, 1990; Ashley, 1993)?

Verse 4, therefore shows the reader how the daughters were able to overcome this obstacle. The daughters are very smart and, so, instead of going straight to their request, they use their father again to appeal to the conscience of the people gathered. Since any good advocate knows that the context of the

problem must be well understood in order to achieve the desired results. It appears the daughters understood their context and so they used it.

They begin vs. 4 with a question; *nbia-~v* [rGy hMl] (*why should our father's name be taken out*). The Hebrew word [rGy] is a verb which means “to reduce, diminish, withdraw or remove” (BDB). In its niph'al form, as used in the text, it can be interpreted as “to be taken away” (GHL). Consequently, the daughters ask the congregation why their father's name should be taken away from the genealogy of his family. Milgrom (1990) interpret vs. 4 as “let not father's name be lost” (p. 231) while Levine (2008) puts it simply as “why should our father's name be deleted” (p. 345), which appeals more to the reader in this case. The daughters strategically tell their audience their father's name will cease to exist if nothing is done about their current inheritance system.

In a way these women were telling the people present that a man who has not committed a grievous sin should not lose his name due to conditions he has no control over. Sterring (2001) posits that: “... the way they [daughters of Zelophehad] presented their argumentation can be regarded as an appropriate example of indirect female strategy” (p. 91). One will agree with Sterring (2001) here that the daughters were good strategists who knew how to use their context to make their plight more appealing to their audience, especially, those who can identify themselves with their cause. Their father's crime was not having a son, but was that enough reason to warrant him losing his place among his relatives?

The Hebrew word “*šēm*” which is rendered as “name” carries a lot of weight in this narrative. Milgrom (1990) argues that a “name exists as long as

it is attached to land” (p. 231). Levine (2008) explains further that the name of the father is tied to the “title to his land” (p. 346) which is inherited by the son. Land is therefore, registered after names and by default, it is only sons who have the legitimate right to bear the names of their fathers. Consequently, both scholars agree that without someone to bear the name of a man, his land which is equal to his legacy among his kinsmen is lost.

Both agree that, in a way, the daughters wanted to emphasise the unpleasant fate that awaited their father’s name. Levine (2008) argues well when he intimates that: “The key word in the statement of Zelophehad’s daughters is the verb *g-r-‘*, which was part of the ancient mathematical vocabulary. It means “to subtract, withdraw an amount or item” (Levine, 2008, p. 345). Per the problems identified with the current law, Zelophehad’s name would vanish from the genealogy of the Manassites. Mbuwayesango (2003) states it bluntly but truthfully that “a son was necessary to perpetuate the name of their natal family. The line of the descent was traced through the male off-springs. Thus, for a man to die without a son, was equivalent to disappearing from the face of the earth” (p. 258).

The narrative continues with the daughters following their question with the motive. They (the daughters) question, “Why should the name of our father be deleted/subtracted from among his clan because he had no sons”. Levine (2008) posits that:

If Zelophehad had left a son, he would have inherited the family land, and it would have been registered under the name of “X, son of Zelophehad.” Under the existing system, with no male heir, the land

would have been inherited by Zelophehad's brothers, or their heirs, who would give their own names to it (Levine, 2008, p. 346).

Up until now, the daughters seem to choose words which do not show their desperation in the unfolding events but verse 4a gives the reader a glimpse of how they felt. The law, as it stood, denied them rights to inherit their father which would subsequently lead to a loss of their father's inheritance, name, and place among his kinsmen. They might have felt frustrated and threatened by the incidence, which gives way to their demand in vs 4b. This was the fate of Zelophehad and any other man who died without leaving a son, per the current legislation. The reader understands why the daughters could not simply remain silent in this situation. It was not fair for their father to lose his place among his clansmen like a rebel when he was not part of the rebels. This injustice is a good enough reason to push one to take a bold step. But were the daughter's concern with only preserving their father's name or were they having an ulterior motive?

By now, the reader can appreciate the intelligence and diligence of the daughters in building and presenting a strong case before those in authority. They gave their audience enough evidence to support the claim they were about to make. They had also tried their best to disassociate their father and themselves from the rebellious Korah faction, lest, they be misunderstood for rebelling against God's will (Sterring 2001). Thus, verse 4b of Numbers 27 states the desire of the daughters which is: *wnyba yxa %wtB hZxa WnL-hnT* (*give us possession in the midst of our father's brothers*). The Hebrew word *WnL-hnT* (can be rendered as "give us" and is functioning as a *qal* imperative masculine singular. The imperative serves mostly as a

command. Thus, the daughters, per their choice of word *tatah lanû* are not seeking permission but rather making a demand for something which they feel they are entitled to. The reader is marvelled as to how the daughters' confidence has improved from hiding behind their father's name to stating a claim for themselves. Here, they actually demand from Moses and the leadership present a land, which is rightfully theirs for, in this instance, they are not begging for charity. (Sterring, 2001 ; Mbuwayesango, 2003). Levine (2008) argues that:

The Hebrew term *'ahuzzāh* chosen by the daughters designate “acquired land,” namely, land acquired through grant or purchase. ...Once incorporated with the territory of the clan, an *'ahuzzāh* would be transmitted as an inheritance. The verb *'-h-z* does not, in this case, connote conquest or seizure, but rather legal acquisition (Levine, 2008, p. 346).

Ahuzzāh (possession) which the daughters are demanding from their leaders are the land allotments that will be given to all the tribes when they enter Canaan. They wanted to be named as part of those entitled to land allotment when they entered the promise land. “Land in this case was important in a sense that it was a symbol of posterity, therefore, the lack of sons meant mortality for a family because there would be no one to inherit the land” (Mbuwayesango, 2003, p. 255). The demand is so forceful that Moses is cornered to make a decision not based on the existing laws on inheritance because there is no law that takes care of daughters.

Deliberation on the Problem: Vs. 5

Moses might have been taken aback by the daughters' request because he remained silent. He did not immediately give any response to the daughters. Scholars have given varied opinions on why he remained silent. Mbuwayesango (2003) samples the views of some Rabbis who either felt humiliated by Moses' lack of knowledge or felt excited over his supposed humility. His silence can be given a lot of interpretations. One of such is that he chose to remain silent in order to reflect on the case presented by the daughters and or he simply did not have any idea about how to solve the problem presented to him. Subsequently, in verse 5, we see Moses approaching God to present the daughters' case to him. Verse 5a reads:

hvm brqYw (then Moses presented): the use of the *waw* conservative in Hebrew in most cases signify the beginning of a new story or scene in a narrative. Significantly, the reader notices that there have been a change in scene therefore, one can deduce that Moses might have taken the daughters' case to Yahweh on a different occasion. The narrative does not give the timeline between the request and Moses presentation to God. It is, however, safe to deduce that Moses might have asked the women to give him time and, so, at the opportune time when he met with God for their usual meetings, he presented the daughters case to him.

The Hebrew verb brq (approach) is very significant in this text for several reasons. First, the verb *q-r-b* has already been encountered in verse 1 of the text but it was in the *qal* form, which implies one taken an action. However, in vs. 5 it is in the *Hiphil* form and thus carries the meaning of one being presented to someone or taken a gift to someone. In this context, it is

Moses who takes the case of the daughters to God (GHL). Levine (2008), on this issue, intimates,

... the verb *q-r-b* “to approach, draw near,” already encountered in Numbers 27:1, above, and employed in any of several stems, is integral to the juridical process as it is formulated in biblical law. ... the sense of the Hiphil, *wayyaqrēb* “he presented,” in the present verse, is unusual, and most nearly resembles the sense of presentation, expressed as “bringing one near” (Exod 28:1, Num 3:6, 18:2) (Levine, 2008, p.346).

Thus, the verb *q-r-b* has been used differently by the narrator in order to help the reader appreciate the dynamics of the text. In vs. 1, it connotes an idea of one going before a court while in vs 5, the reader gets the idea of one being presented to another. Levine puts it simply: “It is not mere coincidence that Numbers 27:5 resonates with Numbers 27:1: *wattiqrabnāh* and *wayyaqrēb*. First, the daughters of Zelophehad *approach*, and then Moses *present* them before YHWH” (2008, p.347).

The narrative continues by explaining why Moses went to meet God. Moses presented to God the $\text{! } \dot{\text{j}} \text{Pvm} - \text{ta}$ (*case or suit*) presented by the daughters of Zelophehad (Milgrom, 1990; Levine, 1993 and Ashley, 1993). The Hebrew word $\dot{\text{j}} \text{Pvm}$ translated mostly as “case/ suit” (1 Kings 8:45, 49, Micah 7:9, Ezek 21:32) is appropriate because the setting in which the request was made could easily pass as a judicial case in a court of law where cases are heard and rulings are given. The reader agrees with Levine on his rendition of $\dot{\text{j}} \text{Pvm}$ as case since the daughters’ request could easily pass as a suit against the existing system of inheritance.

Ashley (1993) explains that “the process by which God and Moses communicated is not specified, but one might point to Numbers 12:8 as a general statement of it” (p.546). Levine (2008) intimates that “Moses did not employ any oracular method of inquiry, and it is to be assumed that he had direct access to God, and simply stated the case to him and requested a decision of law” (p.347). Levine’s explanation confirms an earlier argument that Moses was the only one privileged to have gone to God without using Ephod or going through the Priests. Thus, per the arguments of Poudel and Luintel (2003), the daughters made a good choice in presenting their case before Moses, the one with the highest authority among the Israelites at that time. This is because in order to be successful in any advocacy, one needs to identify those in authority and win their support since they can cause the change needed.

The daughters’ action can be described as deliberate, planned and intentional, aimed at gaining allies and gaining support. Thus, Moses’ decision to present their case to Yahweh meant the daughters have achieved their aim. They have been able to successfully identify their problem, identify those who can solve or help solve their problem, and they have been able to present this problem to them. Not only did they present the problem, but they got those in authority acting on the problem when Moses presented their case before God.

The narrative, at this time, is silent on how Moses felt about the daughters’ audacious move. Was he angry? Did he feel his authority being challenged or did he feel embarrassed that women who had no power and little knowledge of the law (as compared to the males) have identified a lapse he was not aware of? Could it have been that Moses did not have an answer for

the daughters that is why he went to God or he could not have taken any major judicial decision without consulting God? Why did he have to present the case to God when the case was presented before the Tent of Meeting. The Tent has been described as the earthly abode of God, but could it have been that God was not present during the daughters' request, hence, the need for Moses to present the case to God on another occasion.

Ashley (1993) explains that "since there was apparently no legal precedent upon which to base a decision, Moses took the matter before Yahweh, who is not only the ultimate arbiter of the law but its source" (p.546). Subsequently, it can be deduced that Moses was not threatened by the request of the daughters since he willingly presented the case to God. It is probable that he saw the daughters' case as one that needed to be resolved in order to promote harmony in the community. The reaction of Moses to the daughters' request will be analyzed in detail later when the issues in the narrative are being discussed in the next chapter.

The Verdict: Vs. 6-11

Based on the developments in the narrative so far, one may wonder how God will react to the action and case of the daughters. Verses 6 and 7 of Numbers 27 present God's reaction or response to the daughter's request which reads:

Vs.6 hvm-la hwhy rmaYw (*and Yahweh said to Moses*)

Vs 7 trbD dxplc tnB !K (*the daughters of Zelophehad are right*)

%tB hlxn tZxa ~hl !TT !tn (*to give you give to them possession of inheritance in the midst*)

tlxn-ta Trb[hw ~hyba yxa (brothers of father and you pass inheritance of father to them).

The reader noticed that, in vs. 5, the request by the daughters places Moses in a position that requires him to consult Yahweh, the overall head of the Israelites before providing an answer to them. Discussions above have pointed to the unprecedented nature of the case presented by the daughters, thus, requiring further consultation. However, the reader continues to admire the daughters for the strategy they chose in presenting their problem, which makes it impossible to ignore. Subsequently, vs 5 of Numbers 27 reveals Moses presenting the women's case to God. In response, God, accepts that the women are !K (right or just).

The narrative shows us that God reacted only after Moses placed the case before him even though the daughters made their request in front of the Tent of Meeting. The idea that the Tent of Meeting was the abode of Yahweh presupposes he might have been present but verses 5 and 6 explain to the reader that Yahweh was not at the gathering; therefore, Moses had to present the case to him. Yahweh's response raises some questions. First, what were the daughters right about? The daughters made two requests: to maintain their fathers' name and to be given land as property. Were they right in both cases or did both mean the same thing? Hence, it is only a further reading of the text that will illuminate God's viewpoint in relation to the case at hand. He thinks the daughters are justified in asking for an hZxa (possession).

However, in the Hebrew Bible, Yahweh uses the two terms hlxn tZxa (possession of inheritance) which cause the reader to raise some questions. This is because the two terms can sometimes be used

interchangeably. However, its usage in this narrative points to two different meanings. Milgrom (1990) cites Rattary who explains that:

... 'Aḥuzzah is a technical term denoting inalienable property received from a sovereign while nahalah refers to inalienable property transmitted by inheritance. Therefore, the land that will be seized by the Israelites ('aḥuzzah) from the Canaanites when shared will then become their inheritance (nahalah) (Milgrom, 1990, p. 232).

Milgrom's explanation above helps readers to understand why Yahweh uses both terms in this land dispute. The reader notices also that Yahweh's response concentrates on only the land rather than the issue of maintaining the name of their father. God seems interested in securing the future of these women by ensuring that they will not be left out of those eligible to inherit land when they enter Canaan. Did God have another motive for ignoring the first issue in the request? Subsequently, the choice of words by Yahweh raises a lot of questions in the mind of the reader.

Numbers 27: 7b reads: תִּלְכַּן-תָּא תְּרַבְּחֵן אֶחְוָה יָחָא
(*transfer inheritance to their father's brothers*). The reader notices that, in referring to inheritance of property by the daughters who are females, two terms רָבַח (transfer/pass over) and נָתַן (give/grant) are used. In verse 6, God asks Moses to give/grant (נָתַן) which have a sense of permanence however, in verse 7b the term רָבַח (transfer or pass over) is used. The Hebrew verb רָבַח (transfer/pass on) does not give the sense of permanence that נָתַן brings to the text. Further, a cursory look at verse 8 also points to

the use of !tn when granting of inheritance to males are mentioned. Why was this so?

Was God being biased towards the women or discriminative since the existing laws did not support women inheritance? This is because !tn appears to be the normal term used when talking about inheritance because of its usage everywhere. Hence, the first reference by God places the women on the same pedestal as men, which enable them inherit family property. Mbuwayesango (2003) reasons that:

The daughters, per their request, wanted to modify the patriarchal principle that considered sons as legitimate links between generations however, they wanted to be viewed as male descendants. This is because female descendants could not perpetuate their father's name. The males achieve this aim by passing the family name and inheritance to their sons (p. 256).

However, the change in terms create the impression that God did not consider the women as links who can carry the family lineage and, thus, saw them as temporal recipients of a trust awaiting rightful heirs. Levine argues on this same issue that:

It may be significant that the verb used to express the bequeathing of territory by a father to his daughter, in the absence of a son, is rb ["to transfer or pass to," whereas in the following verses, the verb used to express the same process, from father to other male heirs, brothers and paternal uncles, is !tn "to grant." Whereas !tn reflects normal usage respecting the granting of land, the verb rb [, in this sense, is virtually restricted to the present verse. The implication is that

something unusual is being prescribed, from a legal point of view (Levine, 2008, p. 347).

The reader agrees with Levine that a new law was being set but the differentiation between the two genders points to the underlying issue that God, in spite of his open support for the daughters of Zelophehad, still did not believe that they could be equal to their male counterparts when it comes to inheritance. It can, therefore, be deduced from the narrative that, to God, the daughters could never maintain their father's name which is a male's job, the reason why he never mentioned that aspect of the request in his answer to Moses. Mbuwayesango (2003) intimates, to these male figures (God and later the elders and Moses), women were just replacements and can never be sons.

In spite of these misgivings, it is clear from the text that God simply supported the five women's bid to secure the right to own land even if it is a temporal arrangement. He believed women too, like their male counterparts, can and should be allowed to own land which directly enables the women to become independent, a condition naturally never enjoyed by most Israelite women (Bird, 1997). God's answer is without any conditions and it simply reads: *... you will surely give them possession of an inheritance in the midst of their father's brothers, and you will pass over their father's inheritance to them* (Numbers 27:7).

Numbers 27: 7 is clearly a command which gives Moses no room to express his opinion on the issue at hand. The narrator, up until this point, has still not shown Moses's genuine opinion in the narrative. Moses appears subdued and, as a person, he has very little to say. During the entire period the daughter's spoke, he was silent. Then the only time we hear his voice is when

we are told he presented the daughters' case to God. He is also silent when God pronounces his verdict on the case brought before him. He did not seem to approve or disapprove of what was going on around him. He was simply an obedient messenger between God and the people.

The narrative portrays God's character as strong, powerful and authoritative. He does not only come to the aide of the daughters but he goes further to set a new law which will take care of future situations as presented by the daughters. Numbers 27:8-11 is set in a tone of an enactment of law. God gives an order to the entire Israelite community on how to handle such cases in the future by making a new law which addresses the defect in the previous law on inheritance.

Vs. 8 reads: !ya !bW tWmy-yK vya rmal rBdTlarfy
ynB-law
wTbl wtlxn-ta
~Trb[hw wl

(And speak to the sons of Israel saying, when a man dies and leaves not a son to him and you pass his inheritance to his daughters...)

The tone and presentation of this speech by Yahweh place the text in the format of a law, more specifically, a casuistic law. Hence, after Yahweh addresses the daughter's issue, he turns his attention to the entire Israelite community and addresses them. Even though the daughters' issue appears as an exception, God envisages that there can be other women who were suffering from or will suffer from this issue in the future and needs to address it as well. In order to prevent this from recurring, precedence is set with the daughter's case. It could be easily deduced that Yahweh is the one who wields

power and authority in the narrative through his actions and choice of words. He waste no time and quickly moves to formulate a new law and ensures that it takes care of any unforeseen eventualities.

The remaining verses in the narrative concentrate on who qualifies to inherit men who pass away without leaving a male child. Vs. 9 follows 8 swiftly listing those eligible to inherit. Verse 9 reads:

wyxa^l wtlxn-ta ~TtnwtB wl !ya-~aw

(*and if he does not have a daughter and you will give his inheritance to his brother*). Per this verse, the brother of a man inherits him when he has neither a son nor daughter. The narrative up to now has shown how God wields the ultimate power among the wilderness congregation. The way the law is set agrees with the way casuistic laws are set in ancient Israel and even among their Near Eastern neighbours. This law is dependent on a condition, therefore, it is mostly preceded by the “if clause”. So, in this case, the brother gets to inherit the dead brother only when there is no son or daughter.

One thing that is clear at this point in the narrative is the way Yahweh uses the verb רב [(*pass/transfer*) and !טן (*to give*) at different points in the narrative. Why does Yahweh change the verb when it comes to the inheritance of the daughters but maintain the normal verb usually used when it comes to the granting of inheritance to eligible male descendants. This raises a red flag in the mind of the reader. Why are women treated differently from men? Why are women being treated us temporal holders of an inheritance and not permanent or, if I must push it further, rightful owners of their inheritance. The choice of language points to the difficulty women, especially, daughters face when it comes to inheritance and economic freedom. Thus per the context

of the narrative, women could not continue the lineage of the family but these women defied the odds and proved their doubters wrong.

The order of the eligible heirs is very detailed as the narrative continues with the list of other members of the man's clan who too can inherit him in the absence of a brother. Verse 10 reads: ~TtnW~yxa wl !ya-~aw

wyba yxal wtlxn-ta (*and if there is to him no brothers then give his inheritance to his father's brothers*).

The reader notices that Yahweh is very careful here and so tries to include all the eligible heirs so as not to raise another objection from the people. He could have just left it open after the legislation on the daughters were solved, but he diligently lists all the rightful heirs to a man's inheritance after his death. This paints a picture of Yahweh being a perfectionist and meticulous. In spite of this attribute that the reader deduces from the character of God, he still left out daughters in the first inheritance law. It just confirms earlier argument that women were never counted when it came to inheritance (Bird, 1997). They were to be inherited by the males and not share inheritance with the males (De Vaux, 1965).

Verse 11 of Numbers 27 completes the list of those eligible by citing some members from the external clan. Verse 11a reads:

wTxPvMm wyla brQhwravl wtlxn-ta ~Ttnw wybal
~yxa !ya-~aw (*and if there are no father's brothers then you shall give his inheritance to one who is near to him in his clan*). Vs. 11a lists more

people in the family who can inherit the deceased person in situations where all those listed above are not available. This issue points to the desire of

Yahweh to keep the inheritance of the deceased in his clan and even among his relatives, the closest one. This law is elaborate, and it is so to ensure that properties, especially, landed property cannot easily be transferred from one clan to the other.

Verse 11b concludes this narrative by placing the verdict in a judicial mode which the reader can easily identify as being typical of casuistic laws.

jPvm tQxl larfy ynbl htyhw Hta vryw (*and he will possess it. And this will become a statutory ordinance for the children of Israel*),

hvm-ta hwhy hWc rvak (*as Yahweh commanded Moses*).

Levine (2008), on this issue posits, that:

...the way those eligible to inherit the deceased have been listed in the text reflects the order of clan obligations regarding the redemption of land in a situation a clan member defaults payment of a debt in which his land was used as the collateral. The general rule was for his relatives especially his brother to come to his aide to prevent him from losing his land (p. 348).

With Levine's argument above, those who get to inherit you are the same people who have to help you when you are in trouble. The way the narrative ends also places it in a legal framework which makes it binding and lasting. Some scholars have argued that the narratives on the daughters of Zelophehad was part of the period when the Torah was evolving and had not yet been completed. The events being analysed, hence, paved way for the law to be amended to cater for the interest of daughters who lacked society's protection (Milgrom, 1990; Sakenfeld, 1995).

The narrative ends with the daughters gaining a favourable answer to their request—they were to be given land when all the eligible members received theirs. Through their strategy they got their names to be part of those entitled to inherit land when they entered Canaan. Now, when a man dies and he has no sons, daughters can inherit before the brothers are considered. However, their victory is temporal when the elders of their clan decide to also challenge God's ruling.

SECTION B: Request by the Elders

This section entails the case presented by the Elders of the house of Manasseh to Moses against the ruling of God on the case of the daughters of Zelophehad. Levine (2008) argues that Numbers 36:1-13 was introduced to qualify the legalities of Numbers 27: 1-11 on the matter of inheritance. This idea is supported by scholars such as Oslon (1996), Sakenfeld (1995), Milgrom (1990) and Gray (1903) who all agree that Numbers 36 serves as appropriate conclusion to issues raised in Numbers 27:1-11. Numbers 36 anticipates the difficulties that will arise if daughters were allowed to inherit their fathers. The elders from the tribe of Manasseh realised that, if the unmarried daughters of Zelophehad get married, the tribe risks losing their inheritance. This is because per the laws on inheritance, everything a woman has is transferred to the husband after marriage. Hence, Numbers 36 comes in to address the problem.

The question on my mind is why is Numbers 27:1-11 not immediately followed by Numbers 36:1-13? This is because Numbers 36 is a continuation of 27:1-11 but it is placed at the end of the entire book of Numbers. This has generated a lot of discussions among scholars and some explain that, Numbers

36, serves as a perfect conclusion to the book of Numbers. This is because the book begins with the Old disobedient generation and ends with the New obedient generation (Sakenfeld, 1995; Oslon, 1996). Sakenfeld (1995) explains that:

This story forms an appropriate conclusion to the book in at least three respects. First, the two parts of this story, 27:1–11 and 36:1–13, form a bracket holding together all the loosely connected material presented after the second census of ch. 26. Second, ... nearly all of the material of chs. 27–36 is directed in some way toward life in the land and the concerns of the new generation to whom God will give possession of the land. ...Third, the theme of the lack of sin in the wilderness life of the second generation is established by the conclusion of the story, 36:10–12. This theme is implicitly present after the census of ch. 26 in the absence of any further murmuring narratives (p.185).

Per the reasons given above, it is clear that Numbers 27:1-11 and 36 are meant to separate the character of the new generation from that of the old generation. Hence, the contrast between obedience and disobedience unveils how the new generation that entered the promise land are more deserving of their inheritance (land) than their older generation.

Structure of Numbers 36:1-13

The narrative has also been structured variously by many scholars. Gray (1903), Sakenfeld (1995) and Oslon (1996) all give a structure that does not offer much explanation for the division done. But, Levine (2008) does more than just give a structure for the narrative. Although his (Levine) structure is similar to the scholars above, he adds details which explain his

motives for the division. This, therefore, makes Levine's (2008) structure more appropriate to discuss than the others. Levine (2008) structures Numbers 36 as:

Vs. 1–4—A statement of the problem created by allowing daughters to inherit their fathers' property, as presented in Numbers 27:1–11.

Vs.5–9—A statement of the requirement of tribal endogamy for heiresses.

Vs. 10–12—The compliance of Zelophehad's daughters.

Vs. 13—A postscript (p. 575).

The structure explains the reason that necessitated the elders' of the tribe of Manasseh's presentation of a countersuit against the daughters. Yet a different structure is proposed for the text in this thesis. The structure of Numbers 36 that I chose for this thesis is different from what all these scholars have provided since my structure is based on steps taken by advocates to gain attention and, subsequently, effect a change in a defective law or policy. Thus, the reading will look out for the advocacy strategy the elders used just as I did for the daughters' above. Consequently, the reading of Numbers 36 will follow this structure:

Vs. 1-2: strategising

Vs. 3-4: stating the problem

Vs.5: deliberation on the Problem

Vs.6-9: verdict

Vs. 10-13: reaction to ruling

Reading of Numbers 36

Strategising: Numbers 36:1-2

The narrative picks up from where it left of in Numbers 27:11. Claassens (2016) argues that the victory attained by the daughters in Number 27: 1-11 in spite of its positive influence on women groups in their fight for dignity, is short lived. She explains further that “the daughters’ initiative generated a countersuit on the part of the tribal leaders of Manasseh leading to yet another emendation of the law that, in this instance, limits the daughters’ freedom of choice with regard to whom to marry” (p. 88).

Like the suit in the daughters’ case, the reader notices that the elders of the tribe of Manasseh had a strategy which they used in influencing those in authority to effect a change (Poudel & Luntel 2003). Although there are about nine chapters between Numbers 27 and 36, the narrative in 36 comfortably continues the idea in 27:11. Numbers 36:1 reads:

hVnm-!B rykm-!B d[lg-ynB txPvmltwbah yvar
Wbrqyw @swy ynB txPvMm

((and they approached the heads of the fathers of the clan of the sons of Gilead, son of Machir, son of Manasseh from clans of sons of Joseph)

larfy ynbl twba yvar ~yafNh ynplwhvm ynpl
wrBdyw (and they spoke before Moses and before the chieftains, the heads of the fathers of the sons of Israel).

The Hebrew verb Wbrqyw (approach) found in verse 1 of Numbers 36 correspond with hnbrqTw (approach) used in verse 1 of Numbers 27. In verse 1 of Numbers 27, the verb brq is used in the feminine plural sense as it refers to the daughters but, in Numbers 36:1, the masculine plural form is chosen by the narrator since it refers to the elders of the tribe of Manasseh.

Thus, the narrator uses the same root word which points to a relationship between the two narratives. In both instances, they refer to one approaching someone to present a case. The major difference between the two is that 27:1 is feminine plural while 36:1 is masculine plural. So, the reader realises that the narrator begins the narrative in 36 the same way he presents it in 27. Again, both narratives, after the verb, proceed to give detailed genealogies of the people who are approaching the group.

The narrator also goes on to list those who make up the congregation or the group being approached. Unlike 27:1 where it is *dxplc tnB* (daughters of Zelophehad) who approached the congregation (Moses, Eleazer, the chieftains and all the males), in 36:1 it is (heads of the houses) who approached the gathering. The reader, then, wonders why this male group constituting the family heads of the clans of Manasseh approached Moses.

The use of the genealogy here also points to the ancestry of the elders' which, in this instance, gives them a sense of legitimacy. They had a right, like the daughters, to approach the group gathered. Now, the reader really wants to know whether the genealogy of these family heads is the same as that of the *dxplc tnB*. The genealogy of the daughters included Hefer (father of Gilead) who is, however, absent in the elders' genealogy. The narrator, for whatever reason, excludes one name from the ancestry of the elders. Could this be pointing to a case of gender bias by the narrator? Why did the narrator exclude one extra name from the family heads of the clan of Manasseh when it is obvious that the *tbah var* and *dxplc tnB* are from the same lineage? It is likely that the narrator, anticipating the audacious nature of the daughters' request, had to

go the extra mile to prove them worthy of what they were about to ask for. The elders, obviously are leaders of the clan and, so, were well known by Moses and the other leaders and did not need a long genealogy to state their place among their kinsmen. Thus, between the two groups, that is, the daughter and the elders, it is the daughters rather than the elders who needed to prove themselves more worthy to the people.

Women in almost all patriarchal cultures need to prove themselves in order to be eligible in whatever action or decision they undertake. This is because they are not expected to take any initiative but only follow the orders of the men who are considered superior to them (Oduyoye, 2000).

Aside the genealogy which is different from that of the daughters in Numbers 27:1, the list of people present for the elders' presentation is also different. In this case, the elders of the clan of Manasseh approach a group made up of Moses, chieftains and the 'heads of the patriarchal houses of Israel which excludes the all important group of the *hcl* (which represents all the Israelites, the adult males, or the chieftains). The elders' audience excluded the priest who was present in the daughters' audience. The venue for the presentation too was not stated in the narrative.

The absence of the priest, the male congregation and the venue raises a lot of questions. The absence of the priest raises the possibility that this meeting did not take place before the Tent of Meeting. This is because the work of the priest is primarily associated with the Tent of Meeting, which is where all religious rituals take place. His absence from this meeting clearly points to a change in the setting of the elders' request. Why did the elders choose a place that was different from the daughters' if the subject of

discussion is the same or similar? Was the move to maximise their chances of achieving success?

The elders who are males did not have the same problem that the daughters had as unmarried women in a patriarchal society. Unmarried women, in a patriarchal society, had no power and so, the daughters chose to present their case to a group that they felt will assist them achieve their aim. The elders' too chose to present their case to a group that will help promote their agenda. Both advocating groups chose those to be part of their audience when they chose the time and place to present their case.

Therefore, like the daughters, the elders approached their selected audience and presented their case. They spoke to Moses, chieftains and the other elders from the other clans about what they felt was a mistake by Moses and Yahweh. The elders also knew how to present their case to win the support of their audience. Numbers 36:2 reads:

larfy ynbl lrwgB hlxnB #rah-ta ttlhwhy hWc
ynda-ta WrmaYw (*and they said: when Yahweh commanded my Lord
to give the land as inheritance by lot to the sons of Israel*)

wytnbl nyxadplc tlxn-ta ttl hwhyb hWc yndaw
(*yet my lord was commanded by Yahweh to give an inheritance to our brother
Zelophehad to his daughters*).

The elders of the clan of Zelophehad also strategically argued their case in a way to gain the support of Moses and any one present. The elders make reference to two commands by Yahweh to Moses, which to some extent, seem to be the bases for approaching Moses. An analysis of their statement reveals that the elders might have been confused and wanted clarification on

these two supposedly contradicting commands from God. The reader initially assumed that the Hebrew term *larfy ynb* (*sons of Israel*) is a generic term referring to all the Israelites including males and females. But its usage here makes things clear that women especially daughters are not part of the *larfy ynb* (*sons of Israel*). This is because the elders addressed it separately in their speech. Subsequently, they present two laws which seem to be contradicting each other.

The first law was the general command by Yahweh to the people concerning how the land should be shared among themselves. The land was to be shared among the eligible male heirs in the various tribes. The second command was for the daughters of Zelophehad to be allowed to inherit their father. Here, women who were originally not considered as heirs are to be given the opportunity to become heirs. Thus, the first law commands the land to be shared among the sons of Israel, so that they each own land, which will ensure their livelihood. On the other hand, another law is commanding daughters to have a stake in inheritance, which was not the convention. Here, their main concern is with how to maintain the clan's inheritance within the clan.

Hence, they (elders) appear to be uncomfortable with the daughters' inheritance because they know that upon marriage, the husband of the woman becomes the owner of all that the woman has. If the daughters, therefore, marry outside their tribe, then the inheritance of the tribe will be transferred to the tribe of the man they marry. Levine (2008), on the presence of two contradicting commands, intimates,

Two things have happened: The land has been allotted to the Israelites, tribe by tribe as specified in Numbers 34. This was done in compliance with a specific divine command (Num 34:1, 18, 29). Clearly, this allocation was meant to be permanent, and each tribe was to retain all of its allotted *naḥalāh* “territory, inheritance.” And yet, there was a second development that potentially conflicted with this apportionment of the land: Numbers 27:1–11 command Moses[sic] to allow the daughters of Zelophehad to inherit his *naḥalāh* within the tribe of Manasseh. Now, women who married outside their tribe would join their husbands’ tribe. It is this eventuality that Numbers 36 comes to address. The syntax of the statement *wa’ adōnī šuwwāh be-YHWH* “and yet my lord was commanded by YHWH” ... (p. 577)

Levine (2008) tries to discuss the reason why the elders decided to approach Moses and the chieftains. They were unsure of who actually gave the ruling on the daughter’s case. This is because the ruling on the daughters’ case would eventually result in loss of tribal inheritance upon the marriage of these young women, which the initial law on the land allotment forbade. The reader can deduce from the elder’s statement that they were confused and in doubt. Why would God who want to prevent tribes from taking over other tribe’s land give a ruling which would eventually lead to that? Verse 2 of Numbers 36 provides the background for the problem that the elders have identified in the initial ruling on the case presented by the daughters’ of Zelophehad.

Stating the Problem: Vs. 3-4

The elders, in spite of their doubt in the authenticity of the ruling on the daughters’ of Zelophehad’s case, still cited the ruling to support their case.

Like the daughters, they had a legitimate concern which needed to be addressed. After citing the bases for presenting their case, they go ahead to present the problem at hand. Numbers 36: 3-4 helps reveal the problem was and how they expect those present to help them solve it. Verse 3 reads:

tlxNm !tlxn h[rgnw ~yvnl larfy-ynbyjbv ynBm
dxal Wyhw

[rGy Wntlxn lrGmW ~hl hnyyhTrva hJMh tlxn l[
@syw Wnytba (*Now, were they to be married to anyone affiliated with the other Israelite tribes, their ancestral territory would be subtracted from our ancestral territory and would be annexed to the ancestral territory of the tribe into which they married, thereby being subtracted from the ancestral territory apportioned to us by lot*).

The Elders, after pointing to previous legislations that seem to contradict the current ruling on the daughters' case, do not hesitate but present a hypothetical situation to enhance the gravity of the problem they were envisaging. They needed to make Moses and the chieftains present understand the problem likely to be created if daughters were treated as heirs. The usage of the Hebrew phrase yjbv ynBm dxal Wyhw (*now, were they to be married*) meant that the daughters were not yet married and, at the time, the ruling did not pose any problem. The problem that the elders were talking about will arise only when the daughters decide to marry.

Sterring (2001) joins the argument by pointing to a hidden agreement that ensures that a woman's property is taken over by the husband upon marriage and so, the family eventually ends up losing their property. The ruling on the daughter's case also leaves out wife's inheritance, thus, making

the fears of the elders legitimate (Sakenfeld, 1995; Sterring, 2001; Mbuwayesango, 2003). Sterring (2001) goes further to posit that:

... it is obvious that the chieftains are distressed by the prospect that the daughters will get an estate. Suppose they marry from a different tribe, then that tribe could come into possession of the land the chieftains already regard as belonging to their own group (pp. 92-93).

This silence on a wife as heir and the supposition that women were properties of their husbands, paint a picture that the daughters could not be heirs since their role could cause the loss of tribal land. The elders further build their case when they cite the Jubilee Year in the next verse. What has the Jubilee Year got to do with it? Verse 4 reads:

tlxn l[!tlxn hpswnw larfy ynbl lbYh hyhy-~aw
!tlxn [rGy Wnytboa hJm tlxNmW ~hl hnyyhT rva
hJMh

(And when the Jubilee of the sons of Israel come then their inheritance will be added to the inheritance of the tribe they marry into and the inheritance of their father's tribe will be taken away from them)

Verse 4 of Numbers 36 continues to illuminate the problems the family will face as a result of the daughters being allowed to inherit land. They cite an important provision in the laws of Israel which give opportunity for lost lands to be recovered every fifty years. This law can be found in Leviticus 25:8-10, and it states emphatically that lands sold should be returned to their original owners during the Jubilee year. Levine (2008) argues:

... Uniformly, the Jubilee affects 'ahuzzāh land that is transferred to another through sale, resulting from default on debt payment in cases

when land was used as security, or, in certain circumstances, through donation to the Temple. In such cases as provided for by the law, land so transferred would revert to its original owners on the occasion of the Jubilee. However, the laws of the Jubilee do not cover inheritance, so that ancestral land once lost to the tribe or clan through inheritance would be irretrievable (p. 578).

Thus, Jubilee was the only avenue for lost lands to be regained. But, land lost through inheritance could not be regained; hence, the need for sons and not daughters to inherit (Mbuwayesango, 2003). This is because daughters, upon marriage, transferred their inheritance to their husbands which even Jubilee Year could not reverse. Levine (2008) translates the Hebrew *we'im yihyeh hayyōbēl* as “even though the Jubilee will occur” (p. 577); therefore, pointing out the ineffectiveness of the Jubilee in this instance.

Consequently, the elders' use of *we'im* points immediately to their disagreement with the new law that would result in the permanent loss of tribal inheritance. To these elderly men, there was no hope for saving the clan's inheritance if the daughters of their brother or kinsman were allowed to inherit his possession. While the daughters were thinking about how to preserve their father's name and inheritance, the elders on the other hand were seeking to protect the clan's inheritance (Sterring, 2001; Mbuwayesango, 2003).

One interesting thing the reader notices is how the elders deliberately choose words that match those of the daughters. It is as if they were mimicking the daughters. The Hebrew word *yiggāra'* as used by the elders in Numbers 36:4 was also used by the daughters' of Zelophehad in Numbers

27:4. The Hebrew word *yiggārra*‘ means to diminish, withdraw or to vanish. The usage of this word has the likelihood to invoke a strong emotion in the hearers which can force them to act. This word is used in both narratives to signify the loss of family property, in the case of the elders, and the loss of their father’s name and inheritance in the case of the daughters.

From the argument above it is obvious the elders wanted to make the same impact on their audience as the daughters did. So if they (daughters) are concerned about just their father, then, they (the elders) are also concerned about the clan. The reader can safely say that the elders deliberately tailored their argument to match and belittle the case of the daughters. This deduction makes Sterring’s (2001) observation of male attitude in patriarchal societies true. She observes that:

...such a reaction-formation to an achievement of women’s rights is typical of patriarchal society. Whenever men folk feel threatened and fear that their safety is undermined one way or the other, they try to minimize the imagined damage as much as they can by way of instituting counter measures (p. 97).

Sterring’s argument confirms the reader’s suspicion which explains why the elders will even choose the words of the daughter’s in presenting their case.

Land was a sensitive issue in ancient Israel because, for a long time they have been wandering in the wilderness without land until they reached Canaan where their God had promised them one (land). Consequently, land was important to the Israelites because it reminded them of the promise of Yahweh and also ensured the sustenance of the tribes. The basic occupation of the people was farming and keeping flocks. Thus, their livelihood and survival

revolved around their land. The rules concerning land allotment were held in very high esteem because they ensured that tribes continued to maintain their hold on their land. To lose land equalled to losing one's name, identity and livelihood. Land also ensured the economic freedom of its owner; since, through the use of land, one could become wealthy and independent.

The elders, on the other hand, knew that if they skew their argument towards that line, it will win them support or, in the language of Poudel and Luintel (2003), allies necessary for the success of their agenda. And it seems their approach was successful because we see Moses respond to their demand in verse 5 of Numbers 36. But one question that readers may want to ask is, where were the daughters when their achievement was being short circuited by the elders? In verse 2 where the narrative listed those present during the presentation of the elders, the daughters are conspicuously missing. The meeting is made up of only the top leaders in the wilderness community and, so, obviously, women will not be part of them. They were not even part of the general assembly let alone this elite group of leaders. The narrative is silent on the whereabouts and activities of the daughters after they presented their case. Hence, it can be deduced from the narrative that the daughters were not present during the elders' presentation and so, could not have done anything about it. It can even be stretched further that they were either not aware or not invited to be part of the meeting. Their absence in all these developments heightens the suspicion of the reader that the elders were working against their achievement.

This is because the elders managed to present a case that diminishes the importance of the case presented by the daughters. They succeeded in

convincing the people present that the daughters' case was entirely different from their own even though they were seeking the same thing but from different perspectives. While the daughters felt they could be heirs who could protect their father's name, the elders felt otherwise. They succeeded in drawing attention from individual gain (maintaining their father's name among his people) to tribal gain (keeping tribal inheritance within the tribe). Thus, the daughters' case looked unimportant in the face of the elders' case. However, unlike the daughters who suggested a solution, these elders left their question hanging, forcing Moses to respond to them. The reader then wonders how God was going to respond to this case too.

Deliberation on the Problem: Vs 5

The reader turns to vs. 5 expecting Moses to present the Elder's case to God just as he did in the case of the daughters. However, nothing like that occurs since the narrative does not point to that. It reads:

~yrbd @swy-ynb hJm !K rmal hwhy yP-l[larfy
ynB-ta hvm wcyw

*(so by the command of Yahweh, he ordered Moses to say to the sons of Israel:
"what the tribe of the sons of Joseph are saying is right))*

The reader immediately notices that there is something amiss in this verse which highlights the response to the elders' request. There is no clear indication in the narrative that Moses consulted God. In other words, the narrative simply points out that God commanded Moses to say something but we do not see Moses approaching and presenting the case of the elders to God as he did in the case of the daughters. This omission raises some doubts in the mind of the reader as to whether the answer was really coming from God or

Moses himself in an attempt to avoid another rebellion. Thus, according to the narrative, Yahweh told Moses that what the elders said was also right. Levine, on this issue, argues that the phrase “~yrD @sAy-ynb hJm !K” (*what the tribe of the sons of Joseph are saying is right*) is similar to the response God gave to the daughters request in Numbers 27:7 which reads: trbD dxplc tnB !K (*what the daughters of Zelophehad are saying is right*)

In both instances, God acknowledges the legitimacy of each of the claims by the two advocating groups. God proclaims them to be right and gives his full support. How is that possible? How can they both be right? It means they both raised concerns that God felt needed to be addressed in order not to alter the peace among the tribes. The request by the elders, subsequently, leads to an amendment on the law that allows the daughters to inherit. The amendment, however, causes the daughters to lose some level of freedom in order for the desire of the elders to be met. Thus, the daughters do not completely lose the right to inherit land but rather the right to choose a husband from any of the Israelite tribes. They are limited to their fathers’ clan.

Here, also, the reader realises that the choice of diction in response to the elders’ request is similar to that of the daughters. One actually wonders what the narrator wants to prove with this literary style. It is as if the narrator was seeking to juxtapose these two narratives to show that one is the continuation of the other. These narratives represent two sides of the same coin and that is why Numbers 36 has been referred to as an inclusio to Numbers 27:1-11 (Levine, 2008 Milgrom, 1990; Oslon, 1996; Sakenfeld, 1995). The answer God gives to the elders’ request truncates the victory of the

daughters, and thus, puts some restrictions on their choice of a husband. Most expectedly, Numbers 36:6 continues with the details of the command given by God as a response to the request made by the elders.

Verdict: Vs. 6

It reads: rmal dxplc tnb1 hwhy hWc-rva rbDh
hz

~hyny[B bAJl

~yvn1 hnyyhT ~hyba hJm txPvml %a ~yvn1
hnyyhT

((this is the word that Yahweh commanded to the daughters of Zelophehad to say;

they may marry whomever pleases their eyes so long as they marry into a clan belonging to their father)

The narrative continues in a similar fashion as it did in chapter 27 by giving God's verdict on the case at hand. The narrative directly addresses the daughters in the verdict, though they were not physically present during the presentation of the elders' case. Why were the daughters not invited if the case concerns them? Could it be because of the perception that patriarchal societies have about females? Women were mostly not part of the leaders who took important decisions on behalf of the entire clan. The daughters were not elders, neither were they chieftains of their tribe, hence, their presence was not considered to be important when the elders of their clan presented their case. Both the leadership and the elders of the tribe of the clan of Zelophehad did not deem it fit to invite the daughters because they had no power in the community. Thus, their absence or presence would not have affected the

ruling which was going to be pronounced. This act by the male leaders clearly confirms Sterring's argument that men always try to work against the gains of women. Even though some scholars believe the elders were only seeking the welfare of the clan, they should have invited the daughters to the meeting if they had no negative intentions towards undermining their success. To the reader, the elders simply disregarded their rights and needs.

After the initial attempt by the narrator to legitimise this ruling by associating it with God, he swiftly moves to present the daughters with two sets of information. First, God asks the daughters to marry anyone who pleases their eye or whomever they like. However, the freedom comes with restrictions; they could marry whomever they wanted, only if the person came from their father's clan. Why was the phrase:

~yv_nl hnyâhT ~hyny[B (*they may become wives of whomever pleases their eyes*) used when in actual fact the daughters were not going to enjoy that freedom? This can be termed as "freedom with restrictions". As often as one reads and re-reads this text, the irony in the text cannot be ignored. Sakenfeld (1995), thus contends that:

The phrase "whom they think best" may suggest that these women whose fathers had died were free to select their own husbands. Knowledge of marriage customs in ancient Israel is limited, but most scholars believe that families played an important role in arranging marriages. If land-holding women (i.e., women without fathers or brothers) were able to make their own choice of husband, the legislation here would serve to limit their range of options. If, on the other hand, the choice of a husband for such a woman lay even partially in control of other male relatives, this legislation

would help to control squabbles that might break out among the men about what arrangement to make (p.187).

Sakenfeld's (1995) argument points to two sides of the verdict. First, if women were allowed to marry without clan restrictions, then, they were going to be restricted now. However, if they were not initially allowed to make such a choice, then they had the liberty to do so now and may not even be daunted by the clan's restrictions. So, was this a victory or a failure? How will a gender advocate read this part of the text.

It should be stated that, for the reader of this text, the main aim of the women was to gain land which would ensure their independence and wealth in a context that did not really support such audacious move. In order to get to their main goal, the daughters adopted a strategy that hid their main motive (inherit land) and rather developed a line of argument (that is to preserve their father's name) that would be acceptable and appealing to the patriarchal context they were coming from. Thus, the daughters appear to have understood the importance of context and compromise. The sacrifice limits their freedom but will not keep them from owning land, which was their ultimate goal. They were going to own land which can be equalled to economic freedom and ,so, it (the daughters' request) can not be seen as failure.

Why did God/Moses use the phrase "whomever pleased their eye" when that was not really true. Is the text meant to ridicule the daughters on their defeat in the face of the male's success? In fact, it is interesting to see such freedom only to experience boundaries at the tail end of the verse. Was this the only best solution to the problem identified by the elders? Could they

not have asked the man to have rather married into the clan of the family in cases where women who were to be married owned family property? This seems like a solution that would only benefit the man only.

Thus, after announcing their victory, the narrative quickly follows with the restriction. They can choose who they liked as long as he came from the family of their father. Yet, a cursory look at how marriages were contracted among the patriarchs point to little or no involvement by the women (daughters). Thus, it can be argued that since the permission of the woman was not sought when a husband was chosen for her, this new amendment can not be viewed as a loss but a necessary compromise.

Sakenfeld (1995) explains that this twist to the narrative was introduced because they wanted to prevent the loss of family property. She puts it simply, “the rationale is that the land must stay in the possession of the tribe to which it is originally allotted; land must not be transferred around among the tribes” (Sakenfeld, 1995, p. 186).

Why did Moses and God not envisage this issue when they gave their ruling on the daughter’s case? Could we assume that God had even forgotten about his own law? Some scholars argue that the narratives about the daughters of Zelophehad are part of the development of the laws of inheritance and, hence, it is not a matter of God knowing or not knowing; the narratives are part of the process (Milgrom, 1990). However, it is clear that the narrator in this narrative created the character of God as one who knows only things he is told in the narrative. Hence, his lack of knowledge on the consequence of the allowing daughters to be heirs.

The narrative proceeds in verse 6 by describing what was expected of the daughters in exchange for what they gained earlier. It explains that the daughters could not marry anyone they wanted and must, therefore, choose only males from their father's clan. The narrative continues in verse 7 with Yahweh explaining the need for the new amendments. It reads:

tlxnB vyayK hJm-la hJMm larfyynbl hlxn bSt-
al{w (*and no inheritance among the sons of Israel may pass from tribe to tribe, for each*)

larfy ynB WqBdy wytba hJm (*for each of the Israelites must hold on to the inheritance of his father's tribe*).

Verse 7 clearly gives a warning to all the sons of Israel. Here, also, the authoritative nature that comes with laws and God's way of speaking in this narrative can be detected. The reason why the daughters have been asked to marry their cousins is given here. Yahweh does not want the inheritance (nahalah) of the tribes to be surrendered to any tribe.

The Hebrew verb *s-b-b* has been translated as "go around, to surround, to turn back or to change" (HAL). This verb can also be used figuratively to mean change in direction, which makes it appropriate in this text. This is because it is used to explain how the choice of daughters as heirs is a reversal of an earlier order; that is for every tribe to hold on to its land. God's plan for the people during the allotment of the land was for them not to lose their land under any circumstance. What could have led a tribe to lose their land?

There are times that some tribes have to sell their land to pay debts or, in the context of our narrative, when a woman with property marries a man outside her tribe. Thus, the first part of verse 7 warns the people not to lose

their inheritance but, rather, they are to *q̄bd* (cleave, adhere) which means “to hold onto” (Levine, 2008, p.579) to their land. The verb *q̄bd* as used in this verse is a little unusual as its usage in Genesis 2:24 connotes a relationship between a man and a woman (Sterring, 2001).

Sterring (2001) argues that “the social and physical unity that the Genesis text ascribes for man and wife turns Numbers 36 into a command for the man only and with respect to his land” (p. 94). Yahweh’s use of this verb, in this context, points to the seriousness he wants the people to associate with the command of keeping their land within their tribe. He equals the relationship between a man and his land to that of a husband and his wife. The men are, therefore, expected to cleave to the land and ensure that they never lose their hold on it. Like a man will protect his wife from other men, so is he to keep his land from fellow tribesmen. The narrative continues in like manner in verse 8 which reads:

hyba hJm t̄xPvMm dxal larfy ynBtwJmM hlxn tvry
tB-lkw
wytboa tlxn vya larfy ynB Wvryy ![ml hVal
hyhT

(and any daughter inheriting land from among the tribes of Israel, must marry some one in the clan of her father’s tribe, so that every Israelites will possess the inheritance of his fathers)

After giving the reason for the first directive, verse 8 breaks down the command and describes those who are affected by this law. This stipulation in the law is to prevent any confusion, and hence, any daughter who qualifies to

inherit tribal property is affected by this new directive. The Hebrew phrase $\text{וְכִי־לְכָל־בָּתָר}$ (*and any or every daughter*) is only referring to those who can inherit and not all daughters. Levine explains that:

The verb *y-r-š* “to inherit, come into possession of,” enjoys two related nuances. Participial *yōrešet* conveys the act of inheriting, as when the daughter inherits her father’s estate, whereas *lema’an yiršû benê Yisrā’el* expresses a further phase in the process: “in order that each of the Israelites may retain possession (p. 579).

Consequently, daughters who get the opportunity to inherit their fathers are also under the obligation to marry from their father’s tribe to help protect the clan’s inheritance. Interestingly, there is a shift in the focus of the narrative from preserving an individual’s name and inheritance to preserving the clan’s name and inheritance. This is because the preservation of the clan’s inheritance supersedes everything including preserving the name of an individual from the clan. It must, however, be explained that land and names in ancient Israel were always closely related and so, each of this group may have had the same thing in mind, to keep a hold on land. The motive behind the amendment is to help tribes keep a firm grip on their land, and this is seen in the next verse which repeats the directive in verse 7.

Repetition is a literary style meant to emphasise a statement, a verb or a phrase which the narrator wants the reader to take serious note of. However, repetition of a whole verse in this narrative, especially, the repetition of קָבַד (cleave, hold on to) also in this verse portrays the seriousness the people attached to the possession of land. It is clear that the narrator does not want the reader to overlook or belittle this important fact. Ancient Israel viewed land as

God's gift to them which ensured their relationship with him (Bruggemann, 2002). The loss of land means an end to the relationship between God and his people which was not to be toyed with.

Subsequently Numbers 37:9 reads:

twJm wqBdy wtlxnB vya-yK rxa hJml hJMm hlxn
bSt-alw

larfyynB (*and no inheritance among the sons of Israel may pass from tribe to tribe, for each of the Israelites must hold on to the inheritance of his father's tribe*).

The important role that land played in the life of the ancient Israelites explain why the narrator repeats a whole verse to emphasize this point. Tribal lands were to be protected and closely guarded to ensure the preservation of each tribe. It is the source of livelihood and sustenance for the tribe. That is why it was made a law in order to prevent large and powerful clans from taking over the lands of the smaller and weaker ones.

Subsequently, looking at how the plot of the narrative has been developed so far, the daughters seem to have been cornered to accept the new directive. The elders through the strategy they adopted, managed to demean the daughters' problem and, so, it was easily pushed aside to make room for the elders' case. Perhaps, if the daughters were present or had an ally among the elders they could have reminded them of their intention which was not to cause the family to lose its inheritance but to help keep one of the member of the clan from being denied his rights. This could have helped Moses and the leaders not to insist that the daughters marry from their clan but probably add a clause that can keep husbands of inheriting daughters from taking over their family lands.

On the other hand, the silence and absence of the daughters explain why the United Nations Advocacy wing advises “advocates and activists to think of advocacy as far more than the submission of information...” (www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org/uploads/ch_9_2.pdf). By this statement, the United Nations Advocacy wing seeks to emphasise the need to conduct constant follow ups on a project even after attaining some level of success. Your ability to keep yourself and those of your allies abreast of issues concerning your project will ensure success. The daughters seem to have gone to sleep after presenting their case so they were probably taken back when they heard the new legislation.

Reaction to Ruling: Vs 10-13

The narrative continues with the reaction of the daughters to the new law that was promulgated by Moses on behalf of God. Vs. 10 reads:

dxplc tnB Wf[!K hvm-ta hwhy hWc rvaK (*as commanded by Yahweh to Moses so the daughters of Zelophehad did obey*)

The daughters, without any consideration, hesitation, and objection obeyed the commandments of God. This part of the narrative does not correspond to Numbers 27:11 where there was no response after the ruling. The reaction to the ruling included in the narrative concerns the elders’ request seems to bring some finality to the issue about the case of Zelophehad’s daughters.

The manner in which Numbers 27:1-11 ends in comparison to Numbers 36 points to the narrator’s hidden knowledge of a continuation. It appears the narrator was aware that the case of the daughters’ inheritance will be revisited. Hence, the details given of the steps taken by the daughters to show their

acceptance of the verdict seem to point to the eventual solution to the problem presented earlier in Numbers 27.

Could it then be argued that the absence of the immediate response of the elders to God's ruling in Numbers 27 points to their disagreement to the ruling? I do not think that was the case but rather, the elders were equally surprised by the daughters' bold request that they also needed time to think through the verdict before they could speak on the issue. This is because they seem to have all their facts in place when they decided to question the first ruling on the daughters' right to inherit. However, in the case of the daughters, they behaved as expected of them, accepted the terms without raising objections (Sterring, 2001). They came to the realisation that there is nothing they can do, so, they accepted the condition without uttering a word. Vs. 11 states that the daughters married the sons of their father's brothers, thus, fulfilling the command of God. It reads:

ynbl dxplc tnB h[nw hKlmW hlgxw hcrt hlxm
hnyhTw

~yvnl !hydd (*and Mahlah, Tirzah, Hoglah, Milcah and Noah daughters of Zelophehad became wives of the sons of their uncles*)

Numbers 36:11 repeats the names of the daughters once more. The narrative could have just stated that the daughters of Zelophehad married the sons of their uncles, but it mentioned the names of all the five sisters. Names are very important in all societies; especially, in a patriarchal society like ancient Israel where names are mentioned in connection with maintaining family lineage. Sibert-Hommes (2001) intimates, "a person given a name is also accorded a function. Naming signifies endowment with the role the

named person has to play in history. The fact that sons names [sic] are explicitly mentioned means that they fulfil the function of ‘sons of Israel’ (p. 63).

In spite of the truncated victory, the daughters of Zelophehad get their names mentioned thrice in the book of Numbers. It is the name of the daughters which is mentioned and not that of their husbands or even their uncles. This means that it is the daughters who are performing a function here and not their husbands.

Milgrom (1990) also put forth that the daughters could have married any one from their clan but they chose to marry their uncle’s sons who would have been the beneficiaries had they not challenged the system. Their action points to their trust in the males in authority (God and Moses) and the desire to maintain harmony in the society. It also appears the daughters were satisfied with gaining the right to own land. Milgrom (1990) explains that the daughters’ action is, therefore not different from what the laws of inheritance stipulate in Numbers 27:9. They enabled “the families of these very cousins; the ones who first expressed concern” (Levine, 2008, p. 579) to also benefit from the daughters inheritance.

However, it can be argued that the daughters did not begin their quest to destroy their clan but rather wanted to be acknowledged as members of the tribe of Manasseh who also can inherit land. The daughters’ action so far in the narrative, have shown a lot of faith by asking for land when they were yet to get to Canaan and accepting the verdict without raising objections. Why did the daughters accept their fate so quickly without putting up any fight? The daughters were good advocates who knew and understood the principles

associated with advocacy. The issue of context and compromise in the presentation of problems and negotiating for solutions respectively, appears to be on the mind of the daughters throughout the narrative.

They knew how far to push for their rights and when to compromise to bring a lasting solution that will be favourable to all. As much as they wanted their future secured, they wanted it done in a way that would also protect the future of their clan. This also qualifies the daughters to be good examples of African feminists as postulated by Oduyoye (2000) and Okure (1999) who believe that African feminists are also concerned with the freedom of women, men and children. They explain that there are religious and cultural practices that suppress all and need to be changed. They (the daughters) did not seek their individual goal to the detriment of the rest of the people in the society.

Verse 12 answers the question when it explains that this action was taken to help keep the tribe's inheritance within the tribe. It reads:

hJm-l [!tlxn yhTw ~yvn1 Wyh @swy-!bhVnm-ynB
txPvMm (*they married into the clan of the sons of Manasseh, son of Joseph
and their inheritance remained in the tribe of the*)
!hyba txPvm (*clan of their father*).

The narrative explains why the daughters followed the commandment. They too wanted to keep the family's inheritance from being transferred to another family. However, the usage of clan and tribe in this context is confusing. What is the relationship between a clan and a tribe? Pederson (1926) posits that the word "*mishpāhā* (clan or family) is a connecting link between the tribe and the household or father's house" (p.46). He further cites the casting of lots in the case of Achan in Joshua 7 and 14 as clear examples of

how the clan and tribe work. He posits that, the way and manner the lots are cast shows the relationship between the tribes and clan. “The lot is first cast among tribes, then finally among the houses of the thus marked out family (*bātīm*), and finally among the men of the house... the term *mishpāḥā*... must be regarded as an expanded household and is more limited than the tribe” (p. 46). Thompson Gale (2007) also joins the argument by stating that:

The tribal framework contained two kinds of sub-tribal units (Josh. 7:13-14). This subdivision may also be schematic to some extent, as may be deduced from the variety of terms used to designate these subunits. It is, however, evident that the smallest unit was the household (*bet-ha'av*), consisting of the sons of one father, with their wives and offspring. Several households made up a clan *mishpāḥā*: Num. 2:34),... the tribe consisted of several such clans (<https://www.encyclopedia.com/religion/>).

From the above discussion, it can be deduced that the clans were subsets of the tribe. The clans, therefore, are the various households which make up the tribe. The daughters' marriage to their cousins means that they kept the inheritance of their father within the tribe of Manasseh in general and their father's clan in particular; a decision that helped to bring peace and harmony between the daughters and the leaders of the clan of their father.

The narrative concludes by stating that all the laws that have been promulgated so far were done on behalf of God. It reads

ynB-la hvm-dyB hwhy hWc rva ~yjPvMhw twcMh
hLa (*these are the commandments and the judgments which Yahweh
commanded by the hand of Moses to the sons of*)

Axry !Dry l[bawm tbr[B larfy (*Israel in the plains of Moab over the Jordan near Jericho*).

The narrative ends by emphasising that all the decisions and laws that have been formulated were given by God through his servant Moses. This, in a way, legitimises all decisions Moses made since the narrative points to God as the ultimate authority among the people. Consequently, all decisions and legislations taken in the wilderness so far happened under the command of God and not Moses himself. Moses, was thus appears a man following the orders of God, which explains why the real motive and thoughts of Moses on both cases presented can not be easily deduced from the narrative.

However, this is not the last time we hear from the daughters' of Zelophehad. The daughters' silence can, therefore, not be viewed as defeat or loss of courage to speak but rather as a compromise. Every good advocate knows how far s/he can push for a change, taking into consideration the context they are coming from. The daughters knew that one of the best solutions they could get from the context they were coming from was to be allowed to own land, and, subsequently, prevent the loss of their father's name. They reacted again when they felt their gain was being ignored or overlooked. The narrative continues in the book of Joshua where the actual land was shared.

Daughters' Demand: Joshua 17:1-6

The book of Joshua recounts the entry and settlement of ancient Israel into Canaan. The book narrates the various ways by which ancient Israel came to conquer and possess the land of the Canaanites as inheritance.

The narrative of the Daughters of Zelophehad continues in the book of Joshua which presents a totally different scene from the previous ones. Ancient Israel is presented as a people trying to share their inheritance among themselves. The land distribution was overseen by Eliezer, the priest and Joshua, the successor of Moses. Joshua 17:1-6 recounts how land was shared among the descendants of Manasseh.

Structure of Joshua 17:1-6

The narrative about how the daughters finally attained the land is structured as:

Vs. 1-2: introduction

Vs 3-4: request

Vs. 5-6: distribution of land

A Reading of Joshua 17:1-6

Vs. 1-2: Introduction

The narrative on the daughters second appearance before the leaders can be found in Joshua 17:4. However , verses 1-2 introduce the narrative while vs. 5-6 describe how the daughters gained their share of the inheritance. The narrator presents the final section on how the daughters of Zelophehad came to be part of those who own land by listing the genealogy of the tribe of Manasseh. Like the two previous narratives read so far, this section also begins with the genealogy of the tribe of Manasseh. Genealogies are very important because they "... serve as memory devices for keeping track of the relationships among individuals and groups and for ranking them in terms of inheritance and succession rights" (McNutt, 1999, p. 77). Genealogies mostly

list the names of people who have the legitimate right to inherit land and carry on the name of the family.

Verse 1 reads:

hVnm rwkB rykml @swy rwkB awh-yKhVnm hJml
l rwGh yhyw (*now the lot fell for the tribe of Manasseh because he was the first son of Joseph to Machir the first son of Manasseh*).

!vBhw d[lGh wl-yhywhmxlmvya hyh aWh yK d[lGh
yba (*father of Gilead because he was a man of war. And the lot fell on Gilead and Bashan*)

The narrator begins the last section on the inheritance of the daughters of Zelophehad by describing how the lot fell on the tribe of Manasseh with regard to the distribution of the land in Canaan. The setting of this narrative is Canaan which is different from the two previous readings. The people have moved from the wilderness and have entered the promised land. The book of Joshua mostly recounts how the land of Canaan was finally gained through war with those living on the land. At a point in the book too, we witness how the land gained through military conquest was divided among the various tribes.

Verse 1 describes the land distribution that took place in the tribe of Manasseh. The reference to the tribe of Manasseh reminds the reader of the daughters of Zelophehad who also belong to this tribe. Now if land was going to be shared, then it could be expected that the daughters will be given their portion. This is because the first two narratives in this pericope confirmed the ruling of God to include the daughters of Zelophehad as part of those eligible to be given land.

Hence, after the initial statement of how it got to the turn of the tribe of Manasseh, the narrative proceeds by describing Manasseh as the first of Joseph. Per the inheritance laws of the Israelites, it was the first son who received majority of the father's inheritance (De Vaux, 1965). The other brothers got some of the properties of their father but it was the first son who inherited majority of the properties. The first son also had the responsibility to carry on the name of his father. However, there were instances where the second son was chosen over the eldest son to carry on the name of the family (De Vaux, 1965). Though the narrator does not give any reason for describing Manasseh as the first son of Joseph, the reader can recollect how Jacob chose Ephraim the second son of Joseph to rather carry on the name of the father. It is expected then that it will be Ephraim and not Manasseh who will receive the biggest part of the land allotted to the descendants of Joseph.

In spite of all that, the reference to Manasseh as the first born in this narrative cannot be overlooked and will be addressed later. The narrator gives more information about the tribe of Manasseh by describing his son Machir as a man of war. Readers can recollect that it was through war that the Canaanites were driven from the land in order for the Israelites to occupy it as an inheritance from God. By describing Machir as a man of war, the narrator was drawing attention to the exemplary role Machir might have played during the wars with the Canaanites. His courage and success might have gained him the title, 'man of war'. Why is the title of Machir added just as land was about to be shared?

It is likely that because of Machir's successes in war, his descendants were going to be given some special treatment which will be in the form of

land. The narrator explains further that Gilead that was previously mentioned as being part of the genealogy of the tribe of Manasseh is the son of this man of Valour, Machir.

The narrative further proceeds to establish how all the other sons of Manasseh came to possess their inheritance. The sharing was done in the same manner as it was done in the other instances for the other tribes. In all cases, it occurred through the casting of lot. Verse 2 reads:

q̄lx-ynblw rz[yba ynbl ~txPvml~yrtwNh hVnm
ynbl yhyw *(and there was alot for the remaining sons of Manasseh according to their clans, for the sons of Abiezer*

~yrkZh @swy-!B hVnm ynB hLa [dymv ynblw rpx-
ynblw ~kv-ynblw ~txPvml layrfa

(and for the sons of Helek and for the sons of Asriel and for the sons of Shechem and for the sons of Hephher and for the sons of Shemida. These sons of Manasseh, son of Joseph are the males according to their clans)

The narrator spends great time in listing all the sons of Manasseh who were also eligible to receive land. My interest in this narrative (in relation to this thesis), however, is the way the narrator ends the verse. He ends by stating that the lot was for the males from the various clans in the tribe of Manasseh. This concluding sentence in verse 2 creates the room for the daughters in the clan to also get an inheritance. Hence, what happens when any of the sons have daughters inheriting them, especially, coming from the background of the ruling in Numbers 27:1-11. The reader is already aware that daughters can now inherit fathers who have no sons so, the narrator's use of the phrase in

verse two presupposes the next verse will be on how lots were cast to share the land among daughters who qualified to inherit land.

Demand by the Daughters of Zelophehad: Vs 3-4

Verse three is presented as :

yK ~ynB wl Wyh-al{ hVnm-!B rykm-!B d[lG-!B
rpx-!B dxplclw (*but for Zelophehad son of Hefer, son of Gilead, son
of Machir, son of Manasseh had no sons but*
hcrtw hKlm hlgx h[nw hlxmwytnB twmv hLaw tnB-
~a (*daughters and these are the names of the daughters Mahlah, Noah,
Hoglah, Milcah and Tirzah*)

The narrator, without wasting time, hurriedly adds that Zelophehad who is one of the descendants of Manasseh had no sons. The narrator's use of dxplclw (should be translated as 'but for Zelophehad' and not 'and Zelophehad.' The *waw* conservative (w.) can be translated either as a conjunctive 'and' or as a disjunctive 'but'. Hence, the choice of 'but' in this context is appropriate because the idea in vs.3 is contrasting the idea in vs. 2. All the descendants of Manasseh had sons to inherit them except the son of Hefer, Zelophehad who had five daughters and not even one son. This means that, for Zelophehad, it was his daughters who had the legitimate right to inherit his land and preserve his name among his kinsmen.

The way the daughters are introduced in the narrative by the narrator portrays the important role they play in the narrative. This is because, in verse 2, none of the children who are inheriting their fathers have their names mentioned but when the narrator gets to the daughters of Zelophehad in verse

3, the names of the five sisters are listed. This clearly shows that the daughters are the actors or subjects in this narrative. They are the ones who the narrative is about and not the other male children.

The reference to genealogy here further confirms the legitimacy of the daughters to inherit their father. The narrative continues in verse 4 as:

~yayfNh ynplw !n-!B [vhy ynplw !hKh rz[la
ynpl hnbrqTw

rmoal (*and they appeared before Eleazer the priest and before Joshua son of Nun and before the chieftains to say:*)

~hl !TYw Wnyxa %wtB hlxnWnl-ttl hvm-ta hWc
hwhw (*God commanded Moses to give to us a possession in the midst of our brothers. So he gave to them as God had commanded a possession*)

!hyba yxa %wtB hwhyyP-la (*in the midst of the brothers of their father*)

The narrative continues that the daughters hnbrqT (*approached*) Eleazer, the priest, Joshua (the successor of Moses) and the chieftains to speak. The narration, in the first line of this verse, resembles Numbers 27:2. The narration is done in the same manner; the daughters approached Moses, the priest, chieftains and the entire male congregation to speak and request for the right to own land. In this instance, however, Moses was no more but the priest Eleazer and Joshua were there as the ones leading the people. They were playing the role Moses had played and so, the daughters approached them again including the chieftains to speak.

The narrator does not give us the place where this meeting took place in the narrative. The narrative also does not mention the presence of the Tent of Meeting even though the priest was present. However, it can be deduced that this meeting is different from the first meeting in Numbers 27:2. This audience can be likened to the audience that the elders of the clan of Zelophehad approached when they made their request. Except that, in this case, the priest is present and this is because, after the death of Moses, the priest is mentioned any time Joshua is being referred to (Oslon, 1996; Sakenfeld, 1995).

Moses was a religious leader, a judicial and administrative leader while Joshua only played the role of a military and administrative leader. Eleazer, therefore, had to be present in most cases that had to represent God as Moses used to do. Thus, the daughters chose to present their case before leaders in a high ranked meeting. They seem to have learnt a valuable lesson from the step taken by the elders.

Why do the daughters have to make a demand before they get the land they are entitled to? All the male heirs from the tribe of Manasseh received their land automatically but the daughters had to speak before they got what they are entitled to. This incidence clearly confirms the reader's belief that the structures in patrilineal societies mostly benefit men and put impediments in the way of women.

I am sure some of the leaders present were there when the daughters made their first case for the land and so, were in the know of the ruling. The narrative continues that the daughters stood before their chosen audience to remind all present about the ruling of God to Moses in Numbers 27:8.

One interesting thing about this is that the daughters go straight to remind Eleazer, Joshua and the chieftains about God's command for them to be given land among their father's brothers. They did not use their father's name or appeal to the emotions of the people present about their vulnerability. They demanded their rights based on the command of God. The Hebrew word $\text{h}\bar{\text{w}}\text{c}$ (Command) as used by the daughters gives no room for the leaders present to raise any objection against them owning land. Consequently, it is not surprising that Joshua and Eleazer do what is expected. They gave to the daughters just as God had commanded. It is interesting that the leaders seem to have forgotten about God's law on the daughters as heirs until the daughters reminded them.

Another interesting thing about this verse is that the husbands of the five women are not mentioned here. It is only the names of the girls that are mentioned. Their demand for and receipt of land is all done in their name and not that of their father or husbands. During their speech, they used the Hebrew word $\text{!}\text{t}\text{n}$ (give) and not $\text{r}\text{b}[\text{]}$ (to pass on) as was used by God when he was referring to the inheritance by daughters. Thus, for the daughters, they did not view themselves as temporal holders of the land who could not preserve their father's name. To these women, they could play the same role as sons and so, did not make any reference to their husbands or their father when it was time to receive the land.

At the end of the day, the daughters get access to possess an inheritance among their father's brothers; an inheritance that will ensure their independence as women in a patriarchal society. Their patience and persistence paid off. They learnt a valuable lesson in Numbers 36 with the

request by their elders, so they paid more attention to proceedings on land among the tribes, and when their time came, they did not miss the chance. It is likely that the male leaders might have overlooked their inheritance if they had not approached and reminded them of the command of God.

The narrator, in this instance, also does not use *rb[* (to pass over) when referring to the daughters gaining access to land but rather used *!tn* which connotes permanence in their control and ownership of the land. The last two verses in this pericope describes how the land was shared among the sons and daughters of Zelophehad and his father's brothers children.

Vs. 5-6: Distribution of land

The narrator explains how each daughter came by her share of the land. Verses 5 and 6 reads;

!vBhw d[lGh #ram dbl hrf[hVnm-ylbx WlPYw
!DrYl rb[m rva (Thus there fell to Manasseh ten portions, besides
the land of

Gilead and Bashan, which is on the other side of the Jordan)

d[lGh #raw wynB %Atb hlxn hVnm-ylebx
WlPYw

~yrItANh hVnm-ynEbl htYh (because the daughters of
Manasseh received an inheritance along with his sons. The land of Gilead was
allotted to the rest of the Manassites)

The narrator gives us information on how the land was shared among the sons of Manasseh. One thing that is clear in this narrative is that the division of land among the tribe of Manasseh was complicated. This is evident

in the way the narrator tries to explain why some clansmen from the tribe of Manasseh have their territories beyond the Jordan. The lands are eventually divided into ten, five for the sons and five for Zelophehad's daughters.

The daughters finally get their land as promised them by Gog after a long wait. Their approach, persistence and patience yielded results. They had to use a strategy which expected them to compromise when the need arose and also keep quiet when expected. The context of the daughters clearly had an influence on how they embarked on this advocacy. The way they presented their case, the way they acted while waiting for the promise and, finally, the way they demanded that the law promulgated in their favour should be adhered to all contributed to the success they achieved. It is clear from the narrative in Joshua that the daughters closely followed their case and, therefore, came forward to make their demands when it was the turn of their Tribe to be given land.

Conclusion

This chapter entails an exegesis on Numbers 27:1-11; 36 and Joshua 17:1-6 which reveals that though this text is an ancient text, readers can still deduce a modern practice which is being used by a lot of organizations (both governmental and non-governmental). It is surprising that such a modern practice can be found in an ancient text. Oslon's (1996) description of the daughters as "models of advocacy" can be seen when the text is read from the point of view of gender advocacy. The daughters, through their actions, brought justice to all daughters who would have been left unprotected by the laws of inheritance among their people. They deliberately and systematically worked to cause a change in an age long unfair inheritance law.

The reading established that God was the owner of land among the ancient Israelites. This is evident in the way he is consulted on issues pertaining who can own land and who cannot. His authority and control over the Israelites is felt through out the narrative.

More so, the compassion that God shows to those in need is seen in the way he patiently listened and handled all the request made to him. For both advocacy groups, the problems they raised were swiftly handled by God to bring harmony to the Israelite community. God's desire to establish a balance between the weak, destitute and those on the fringes of power is seen in the way he listened and solved the problems raised by the daughters' of Zelophehad.

The reading of Numbers 27:1-11 and 36:1-13 and Joshua 17:1-6 also revealed the strategies which were used by the two main advocacy groups (daughters and elders) identified in the text. It also points out that advocacy is a process and not a one day event. It takes a long time and alot of patience and persistence lest you lose hope and give up. The daughters did not give up and they stayed together till they got what they wanted.

The next chapter, therefore, analyses the details in each approach and how the strategy adopted influenced the results attained. It will also analyse the role some important characters in the narrative played in the execution of the strategy adopted by the daughters and the elders from the clan of Zelophehad. Finally, the issues that are drawn from the narrative will be analysed from the perspective of a Ghanaian daughter.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF ISSUES IN THE EXEGESIS

Introduction

Patriarchy fears women's power and seeks to circumscribe and control it. Precisely because women have power that they can use to subvert authority, they represent a threat to patriarchal society. It is therefore in the interest of those who maintain the social and symbolic order to represent women characters as using their power in service of patriarchy (Exum, 2001, p. 82).

Exum's argument above emphasise the power women have when they decide to work together. The narratives on the daughters of Zelophehad confirmed this assertion when the women who originally were not heirs became heirs when they decided to come together and fight for a common cause.

This chapter analyses the reading in chapter four paying close attention to the advocacy strategy each group (that is the daughters and elders) used and the level of success achieved. Though advocacy is a modern term, its practice has been with humans for a long time, and the reading in chapter four confirms this assertion by the researcher as was found in the narrative. The reading points to how the daughters and elders both used the strategies espoused by this practice to achieve some levels of success in the quest to gain land, power and the preservation of family inheritance.

The reading showed how daughters who had no power and could not inherit presented a well planned case to gain the support of God to be included

in those eligible to inherit family land. The reading showed the difficulties they faced as a result of the structures in the society which appears to work against women and their desire to become heirs. However, God's concern for every member of the Israelite community, even young women who were considered powerless led to daughters being included in those eligible to inherit land.

The reading also raised the linkage between family name and inheritance. The inclusion of the daughters in the genealogies of their tribe portrayed the narrator's hint that the daughters were eligible to inherit since they possess the tribe's name. The names of the daughters are first mentioned in Numbers 26 during the second census; before their full genealogical details are provided in Numbers 27:1-11 in connection with the request of land. The daughter's also used their father's name to help win the support of the congregation to become heirs. Hence, the reading showed the important role names play in the family and how it offers an individual's identity among her/his tribe and clan.

A cursory reading through the Hebrew Bible mostly points to a lack of collaboration among women. It must be stated that women in the history of ancient Israel have exercised some level of influence in important events but these successes have always been achieved individually or on individual basis (Bird, 1997). That is, hardly do you see women coming together to fight for a common goal as seen in Numbers 27:1-11. This affirms the view of scholars who believe that patriarchy, as an institution, has always used class and ethnicity to keep women from forming alliances which invariably empower them in their fight for equality (Exum, 2001). Hence, the collaboration among

the daughters in Numbers 27:1-11; 36 and Joshua 17:1-6 provides one of the rare cases where we see women collaborate in the Hebrew Bible.

This chapter therefore, follows this outline: analysis of daughters' strategy, analysis of elders' strategy, comparison between the two strategies and a discussion of the characters in the narrative with special focus on Daughters, Elders, Moses and God. The last part of this chapter will then analyse Numbers 27:1-11; 36 and Joshua 17:1-6 from the perspective of the Ghanaian daughter who cannot inherit her father and the major findings in the thesis.

An Analysis of Daughters' Strategy

Biblical accounts in general hardly recognise daughters as compared to sons (Sibert-Hommes, 2001). Sons are always in the limelight while daughters are almost always relegated to the back because of the belief that daughters are eventually married and end up becoming part of the husband's family (Exum, 2001). Daughters were not named as heirs even in the absence of sons until the daughters of Zelophehad requested for the laws to be modified. This is because daughters and women in general were only part of a man's properties and so were not meant to inherit (Bird, 1997; Exum, 2001). Women were perceived as weak and therefore, in need of constant protection from men which eventually resulted in the suppression of their freedom.

This perception is not only peculiar to ancient Israel but with most patriarchal societies, including Ghanaian societies. A sample of some idioms and adages used among some tribes in Ghana confirm this view on women. Even those who practice the matrilineal system of inheritance in Ghana sometimes use expressions which belittle the efforts of women in the society.

Among the Akans, of Ghana sayings such as “*ɔbaa tɔ tuo a etwere barima dan mu*” which means (*if a woman buys a gun, it is placed in a man’s room*), *ɔbaa tɔn nyadowa na ɔnnton atuduro* (*a woman sells garden eggs not gun powder*) and *Akoko bere so nim adekyee nso ɔhwe onin ano* (*the hen knows when it is dawn but still looks up to the cock to announce it*). These adages, among many others, all point to the futility the Akan group places on the effort of women to assert themselves (Amoah, 2002). They belittle the struggle of women to gain their independence from dominant cultural and religious norms. Amoah (2002) opines:

The main thrust of some Akan religious beliefs and cultural statements is that role and expectations and perceptions are clearly gender based and that in some instances, men have control over certain vital activities of women. Thus, in a way, the Akan cultural heritage gives men the opportunity and power to control women (p. 20)

In view of the argument above, the credit for the efforts and achievements of women in the Akan cultural context is given to men. This is the context of the Ghanaian daughter, which is not different from the context of the daughters of Zelophehad in the Numbers and Joshua narrative. In spite of the time gap between the two cultures (Israelite and Ghanaian), it appears the perception of most men about women remain unchanged. Thus women are still expected to totally depend on men in order to achieve self-worth and economic freedom.

Consequently, it is likely that the daughters of Zelophehad were aware of this limitation as they prepared to meet the leaders to present their case. The narrative tells how the daughters chose to present their case to an audience

made up of all the leaders and males in the wilderness community. They presented their case on a day that had all the male elders of the Israelite community which was made up of Moses, the Priest, the chieftains and all the hōd [(congregation) present.

The setting could easily be likened to a judicial court where cases could be presented for fair hearing. The people there were not only the ones who could take a decision on their case but could also serve as witnesses. These people constituted leadership of the community who frequently took decisions on behalf of the people and so their support or otherwise would be important to the step the daughters had taken. For the researcher, it is obvious that the daughters had really planned, and the decision to speak and where to speak was not a coincidence. This decision by the daughters is in line with some of the principles of advocacy, which is described as planned, systematic, and deliberate (Poudel and Luintel, 2003). The daughters' initial step of approaching this congregation satisfies this element in terms of strategies needed to be successful in any advocacy.

However, it could be deduced that the daughters jumped protocol as they presented their case to Moses, ignoring the chieftains who were responsible for minor issues that happened in the various clans. In Exodus 18:24-27, Moses is given advice by his father-in-law to choose leaders from the clans to take care of the day to day issues of the clan and only refer highly contentious cases to him. Milgrom (1990) posits that the chieftains were the ones who managed the affairs of the clans on a daily basis. It was only in cases where they felt overwhelmed that they referred it to Moses. Thus, the daughters should have approached the chieftains first and they would have

probably referred it to Moses if the case overwhelmed them. But, the narrative starts with the daughters directly approaching Moses and the leaders present. They by passed the elders of their father's clan and the chieftains who handled the day to day activities of the various clans. This choice was probably based on the magnitude of the case they were pursuing. These young women knew that the one who ratified laws was God and the one who directly had access to God on day to day basis was Moses. It could have also been that their request would have been denied or pushed aside if they had gone through their elders.

Consequently, the elders were part of the *hđ* [*male congregation*] when the daughters presented their case but the daughters were not part of the audience when the elders presented their case. The women were not part of the governing body and, therefore, lacked the power to be part of such highly ranked meeting. This can be viewed as a great disadvantage to women in their fight against unfair customary laws. If women are not part of those who take final decisions in the society, how will they be able to prevent negative surprises?

The elders' choice of audience was made up of male leaders which therefore sideline the daughters of Zelophehad. Since women were not part of any group, even the congregation they presented to, they (the daughters' of Zelophehad) needed an ally who would have stood for their interest when the need arose.

Secondly, the daughters used a variable that was common and acceptable to all present in order to gain acceptance and hearing. They used the name of their father which was his legacy and identity to state their case. The name of their father and his legacy among his family risked being lost like

a criminal condemned to death by God only because he died without leaving a male heir. The narratives about Korah and his band of rebels emphasised the fate that awaited people who rebelled against God and his chosen leaders. The daughters realised that their father was going to be treated the same way if they do not speak up. The daughters' use of their father is also appropriate since the people present were all males who could also end up like Zelophehad; die without leaving a male child. This is what, I believe, helped the daughters gain the support and help from Moses and God at the initial stage.

However, it can be deduced that behind the preservation of their father's name was the desire by the daughters to own land in an agrarian culture. Ownership of land in this context could be equalled to wealth, independence and economic freedom. This request is therefore a bold step by the daughters to take control of their lives but, even in this endeavour, they had to depend on their deceased father's name to achieve their goal. This, therefore, seems to support the argument that women need the support of their male counterparts (Ntreh, 1998; Oduyoye, 1998; Okure, 1999) in the fight for equality in the society.

The need for women to depend on males in their fight against unfair customary laws in Ghana is clear because we still have males as heads of families in both patrilineal and matrilineal societies. One would have expected women to be heads of families in the matrilineal system of inheritance which trace its lineage through the women in the family. These male family heads can be likened to the royal chieftains in the biblical narrative. They, therefore, see to the daily governance of the family including settling of disputes

between individual members of the family and also overseeing the sale, lease or transfer of family land. The daughters needed their father's name and the entire male congregation to witness their bid to gain land (wealth and economic freedom). Hence, the daughters not only identified the needed audience but they also chose to design their request to gain the maximum support of their audience.

Furthermore, the approach the daughters adopted in presenting their case could be named as part of their strategy. Instead of stating their request/intention from the very onset, they first decided to describe their condition by detailing their father's death and its effect on his name. They began as timid girls but built their confidence during the presentation to the point of openly demanding their rights. They were able to do this because they pointed out the consequences that would befall all men who died without leaving behind male heirs. This, I believe, was a perfect decoy to hide their objective; which was to own land. Their meticulous research helped them discover a gap in the existing laws, which justified their stance against that law. The daughters of Zelophehad were able to get Moses and God to act on their request because they planned and approached the right crowd with the right case. They, therefore, got acknowledged for being right and subsequently, gained the opportunity to own land.

However, the daughters did not speak or act after their initial request which went a long way to affect the success of their case. "Advocates and activists should however think of advocacy as far more than the submission of information..." (www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org/uploads/ch_9_2.pdf). This is because most advocacy strategies, if not all, include follow ups and

lobbying which appears to be absent in the daughters' strategy. Their silence and lack of activity can be viewed as negative per the argument above; however, the importance placed on context in advocacy, makes this point very difficult to use in the case of the daughters. Their absence from the meeting or audience points to their lack of awareness about the case suit presented by the elders. They might have been surprised by the verdict but they knew that, to have such a law ratified, there was the need for compromise. So clearly, the daughters sacrificed their freedom in order to gain economic freedom and also protect the inheritance of the family.

In spite of everything, they were not silent forever. They spoke again when they felt their win or gain was being overlooked. Their demand in Joshua 17: 1-6 shows that they keenly followed their request after the initial surprise and so were not taken by surprise again. Their momentary silence was therefore, not out of fear or loss of voice but rather due to the strategy they had adopted and the context they were coming from.

The strategy they adopted respected the laws that governed the people except those that denied women access to land (independence and economic freedom). Eventually, their plan yielded results when they were finally given land among their father's brothers. It must be emphasised that it was the daughters who were given land and not their husbands. This is because it was their names that were mentioned in connection with the allotment of land in Joshua 17:5.

An Analysis of Elders' Strategy

The elders being referred to here is made up of the male leaders of the tribe of Zelophehad who were responsible for the running of the tribe

(Milgrom, 1990; Levine, 2008). The narrative describes these male elders as kinsmen of Zelophehad which will surely include some of his own brothers. These men were the heads of the various clans from the tribe of Manasseh from which Zelophehad emanates. Hence, they were the ones who could be affected if the land of their family was lost through daughters' inheritance (Levine, 2008). They also decided to derail the daughters by raising an objection in the form of a countersuit. Their case is referred to as countersuit because they disagreed with the daughters with regard to their (the daughters') right to inherit land and carry their fathers' name. They did not believe the daughters could play the role of sons so they showed their objections by also pointing out the dangers of allowing daughters to own land. They did not give Moses any suggestion in the narrative as to how he should solve the problem about the daughters' inheritance. It is, therefore, safe to think that, for them, it was not appropriate to allow the daughters to inherit land, which could result in its permanent loss.

Did these male leaders adopt an approach that can be likened to an advocacy strategy? Yes! The reading in chapter four showed that the steps the elders adopted could be likened to an advocacy strategy.

To begin with, the leaders of the tribe of Manasseh also approached a gathering to present their case. They chose an audience that was slightly different from that of the daughters but equally made up of people who had the power to cause the change they desired. Their audience was made up of Moses and the chieftains with the conspicuous absence of the priest and the general male population who were present during the presentation of the daughters.

The setting for the presentation of this suit was also different. In this instance, the narrative is silent on the venue for the countersuit so it can be deduced that it did not take place in front of the Tent of Meeting as it did in the daughters' case. It, therefore, means that the meeting did not take place in the presence of God which explains the absence of the priest. The Elders took a strategic decision to present their case before the core leaders of the Israelite community for the following reasons.

First, it was due to the power the audience wielded as representatives of the various families. The power and authority of the elders could be deduced from the fact that they were allowed to approach and present their case before such an audience.

Their (elders) choice also point to how society assists males in their endeavour as it does not place barriers in their path to achieve their aim. It is obvious that the daughters did not know about this meeting and could not have even been part of it. However, I think the presence of the all male congregation won the daughters the much needed public sympathy which is important in advocacy. The elders, on the other hand, did not need the general male group's support hence, chose the most influential group to convince. Many societal traditions, norms, values, and structures work to give males an edge over females not by intention but by default. In Ghana, the absence of queen mothers from the National and Regional House of Chiefs is a clear example of how structures work against the progress of women. The National and Regional House of chiefs is the body mandated by an Act of Parliament in the 1992 constitution of Ghana to reform outmoded and socially harmful customary practices. Thus, if such a body do not have women as

representatives, then customary laws that are affecting women will not receive the desired attention.

Secondly, the setting point to a secret meeting held behind closed doors. This meeting presumably occurred not in the presence of God, since both the Tent of Meeting which signified the presence of God and the Priest who was a representative of God were both absent from the meeting. Subsequently, I posit that, per the narrative, the leaders probably did not want God present that is why they chose a setting that was different from the daughters. God's presence might have caused problems for them since they could have been easily mistaken for rebels standing against his authority. It is also possible to view the presence of Moses as signifying the presence of God but why did the narrative on the daughters take place before the Tent and the priest unlike the elders? It confirms the belief that women face a lot more difficulties in their pursuit for economic freedom.

Furthermore, they (elders) presented their case in similar fashion as the daughters. The narrative presents the elders adopting the same method and procedure as used by the daughters to present their case. They began by pointing out their doubts over the authority behind the formulation of the new law which allowed daughters to inherit. Their initial statement creates apprehension in the minds of Moses and the chieftains gathered. The way they presented their case points to two incidents; either God had forgotten his own laws or he did not formulate the new law. They build their argument by pointing out the problem likely to arise if the daughters who have been allowed to inherit their father got married. The entire clan risked losing their *naḥalāh* if the inheriting daughters got married. This is because, per the

current inheritance law, a woman's husband inherited all her properties; so, if the daughters who can now inherit get married, their husbands will take over their land which will become the property of the husband's tribe. That was the overt desire of the elders while their covert desire was to own their brother's land. This is because, if not for the daughters, the brothers of Zelophehad would have inherited him since he had no sons (Levine, 2008; Milgrom, 1990).

The strategy adopted by the leaders of the tribe of Manasseh made the case raised by the daughters appear insignificant. They showed their concern for the clan vis-à-vis the daughters' concern for their father. The elders moved the argument from the individual level to the collective level. The elders' presentation points to an in-depth knowledge of the laws which they used to their advantage.

The approach they adopted worked for them when an amendment was made to the law promulgated for the daughters which took care of the elders' concern. Their ability to show the deficiencies in the new law enabled them to achieve their goal of having the law ratified. The elders did not remain silent even when God, the final authority in the camp of the Israelites had spoken. They chose to study and find a defect in the new law which they did not hesitate to point out. Thus, the leaders planned, chose their audience and deliberately presented their message to create concern in their audience to cause them to act.

Comparison between the Daughters' and Elders' Strategy

From the narrative, the elders did not need the support of any male or female group in order to present or win their case. Unlike the daughters who

needed to use the name of their father in order to win the support of the leadership and the entire male congregation, the elders did not need such support. This shows how difficult it is for women to make headway in their desire to gain the social and economic independence.

Consequently, the clandestine nature of the elders' suit is further enhanced with the way God supposedly responded. The narrative is silent on how God heard this suit as it does not speak about how and when Moses presented the case to God for his verdict. There is no change in scene; immediately the elders ended the presentation of their suit, they were adjudged to be right, and a verdict is given (Numbers 36:5).

The process the daughters have to go through in order for God to intervene is more elaborate than that of the elders. This is the challenge women face on a daily basis when they have to prove themselves worthy of every position and achievement they gain.

The genealogy of the daughters is even longer than that of the elders which confirms the reader's belief of the narrative's bias against women. Numbers 27:1-11; 36 and Joshua 17:1-6 has been hailed as one of the texts that celebrate the exploits of women in the Hebrew Bible (Claassens, 2013; Mbuwayesango, 2003; Sakenfeld, 1988). In spite of this status given to the text, the reading in chapter four revealed that the male characters in the narrative could not hide their perception on women.

From the onset, the daughters are given a longer genealogy than their uncles which means that, from the very beginning, they (the daughters) are forced to prove they belong to the Manassite tribe and so have a right to the tribe's inheritance. This issue helps the Ghanaian daughter understand that the

road to economic freedom and acquisition of rights is not smooth. Even though the genealogy is meant to emphasise the place of the daughters among the Manassite family, it, however, points to the difficulty women face in their fight against unjust social and cultural traditions.

Secondly, the list of people present during the presentation of the daughters' suit is also more inclusive than those present for the suit of the elders. The daughters needed to include the entire male population which was made up of those with and without power to enable their suit to get a reaction from the ones who had power. The list consisted of Moses, Eleazer the Priest, the royal Chieftains who saw to the daily governance of the tribes and the entire elderly male population. On the other hand, the elders' list consisted of Moses and the Chieftain. Why? This clearly point to the narrative bias against women, who in this case needed to convince all or more males in order to achieve their aim while the elders felt confident and not constrained to depend on such a large crowd.

The setting of the narrative is also different. The daughters appeared before the Tent of Meeting which was the physical abode of God among the Israelites in the wilderness. The elders, on the other hand, appeared before this selected male group, but the narrative is silent on where the meeting was held. The absence of the Priest meant that this meeting did not take place before the Ark (God). While the daughters felt the Tent (presence of God) was necessary to their suit, the elders simply felt otherwise and so ignored it.

Moreover, the response of God as presented by the narrator appears to be bias against women. God, in his response, commends both for being right but his choice of the Hebrew words *!tn* (give) and *rb [* (pass on / transfer)

raises doubt about his perception towards women. The Hebrew word !tn (give) is the word commonly used in reference to inheritance which was basically a male prerogative. Daughters were not part of the inheritance system so their introduction meant that the word !tn (give) should also be used when referring to daughters' inheritance. However, God's usage of rb [(transfer) instead of !tn (give) points to some bias against the daughters. The Hebrew verb 'transfer' lacks the sense of permanence which 'give' provide in the narrative; an issue that betrays the stance of God towards the daughters.

This is very confusing as, at one point, the narrator wants the reader to view God as one who supports women, and, at another point the narrator creates another image of a God who allows his patriarchal background to get the better side of him. This double side of God created by the narrator, I believe, betrays his believe in equality which can be deduced from his initial response to the daughters' case. The narrator presents God as being unsure of the daughters' ability to carry on their father's name through their inheritance of his land. This explains why God did not make any comment on the daughters' ability to continue the name of their father but only spoke on their right to be given land. Thus, through the response, it can be deduced God did not consider them heirs worthy to have permanent control over the land as the males did. Thus, the daughters were given only temporary holding on the land with the use of the word rb [while men were given permanent hold on the land with the use of the word !tn . They were to hold it in trust for their male children.

Consequently, the verdict pronounced by Moses on behalf of God in the elders' case point to effects of completely putting your faith in men who have power. Though it was discussed above that the daughters, as part of the advocacy strategy they were using, understood the need for compromise and so accepted the turn of events, it is clear that they did not know of the meeting and could have lost everything. This is because the elders presented the problems associated with the daughters inheritance but did not propose a solution. The solution could have been in two ways; either for the women to marry from their father's clan or be prevented from inheriting at all. Their displeasure shows their disapproval leading to their lobbying. Thus, lobbying is represented as an important part of an advocacy strategy. It is, therefore, not surprising that the daughters, after this incidence followed keenly the developments concerning the allotment of land in order not to miss another opportunity.

Though the tone of God in the narrative is authoritative, giving no room for questioning, the ability of the elders to challenge him point to his tolerance which the daughters could have taken advantage of to make another request. They could have asked for the freedom to marry whom they wanted and insisted for their lands to remain in their tribe. If a new law could be promulgated to allow daughters to inherit, then, the law could have added that the properties of inheriting daughters were to remain in their clans and, therefore, could never be transferred to their husbands.

It is clear from the discussion above that the daughters of Zelophehad and the elders of the tribe of Manasseh both adopted advocacy strategies that suited their goal and enabled them achieve their goal. Though there are slight

differences to each strategy adopted, it can be argued that their place in the community had a great influence on the kind of advocacy strategies adopted and used. The context of each advocacy group, therefore, had an important influence on how they pursued their goal. Both groups had to compromise, which points to their negotiating skills and abilities. The elders had to allow daughters who were never part of the eligible heirs to inherit and the daughters too had to narrow their choice of husbands in order to protect their family's inheritance. However, it is clear that the structures in the society made the implementation of the strategy of the elders easier than the daughters. How then did the narrator portray the character of those who played important roles in the strategy of both the daughters and the elders?

The Character of the Daughters of Zelophehad

The first of the characters to be discussed are the daughters of Zelophehad. Sakenfeld (1988) describes the daughters as great initiators who took a bold decision in the face of a difficulty. The narrative portrays the daughters as strong willed women who knew what they wanted. From the onset, the daughters are described with active verbs such as *brq* (approach), *dm* (stand) and *rma* (speak). They are very energetic and appeared not to be intimidated by their condition and audience. They were powerless and had little influence in their community because they were young unmarried women without the protection of a man in a patriarchal society where women were always expected to be under the protection of men (Bird, 1997; Oduyoye, 1996; Sakenfeld, 1999).

The context of the narrative also supports the assessment of the daughters as brave, courageous and great initiators. These traits confirm the

argument that daughters must develop courage and confidence in order to tackle cultural norms that subjugate women. This is because in the absence of confidence, one will not be able to speak and present a strong argument which will lead to reforms. Here, advocacy groups fighting for the rights of women with respect to inheritance and other customary laws can be of help to young women who suffer due to some of these unfair practices and perspectives in the society.

Another trait that can be deduced from the daughters' actions is that they are very knowledgeable in the Israelite traditional laws. Their knowledge of the law enabled them identify a gap in the existing inheritance law, which helped solidify their suit. In order for Ghanaian daughters to win their fight against unfair customary laws, there is the need to gain in-depth knowledge on these customary laws. Knowledge and education of women have served as the turning points in feminist struggle on the continent and in the world over the years. Hence, education and awareness creation in this instance can serve as the way out for daughters who cannot inherit and even receive education under some of the customary laws in the country. For the daughters, upon their proper knowledge of the laws, were able to identify the gap which they explored to their advantage.

Awareness creation is also an attribute of advocacy which will help even those who can inherit but are not knowledgeable about their rights to stand up and fight for them. The daughters' knowledge of inheritance laws is evidenced in the way they presented their case before Moses and the entire congregation. They cited the laws on inheritance and the gap between the laws vis-à-vis the maintenance of a man's name which was very important in their

community. This shows that ancient Israelite women either had the opportunity to study the torah like their male counterparts or the daughters studied the law in order to find a gap to support their case. One way that daughters can end the cycle of societal abuse is through the encouragement of girl child education. It is only when a person is educated that she comes to understand the provision in the law which enables her to fight for her right.

Today, education of girls has improved tremendously with the boy girl ratio in the basic school being almost the same. The situation is better in the basic and second cycle education, however, the number of girls in the graduate and post graduate level begin to diminish due to pressure from society. The societal demand for women to marry and have children makes it difficult for a lot of women to pursue post graduate studies. But, the narrative on the daughters reveals that they were emboldened to take that step because of their knowledge in the laws of inheritance. Hence, education for women can never be overlooked if the fight against discriminatory customary and societal laws can be won.

The narrative also portrays the daughters as being great strategists. Their decision to wait till they had all the men in the community including the leaders present before presenting their suit confirms this trait. The daughters could have approached Moses personally to present their case to him or even the chieftains of their clan. However, they knew the importance of having all these people present during their presentation; thus, they waited for a day that these men will meet and they presented their case.

Additionally, they could have directly asked for the right to inherit their father from Moses and the rest of the people but they realised that a

direct request may be rejected. Hence, they chose to present the consequences of not allowing them to inherit their father first before proceeding to make their request. The use of the Hebrew verb [רָגַע] (withdraw, diminish or vanish) in relation to what will happen to their father's name and identity because he had no son helped them garner support for their case. A lack of male heir which will lead to the loss of an individual's identity, name and place among his kinsmen was therefore, enough to force Moses to act on the case. Their ability to properly study those in authority enabled them develop the best plan that won them the much needed support.

The request for land which was made in the wilderness points to their resolve to plan ahead of time and protect their future. This also points to the fact that nothing can be taken for granted when daughters decide to come together to reject many of the cultural norms that undermine their progress and belittle their efforts in the society. Ghanaian daughters must understand that only a well planned strategy can yield the results they desire.

Lastly, the daughters can be described as obedient persons, who had faith in God. The narrative in Numbers 27:1-11 is part of the incidents that occurred during the period of wandering in the wilderness by the Israelites. They were yet to enter the land of Canaan where the allocation of land was to take place. The request of the daughters was in anticipation of that day when land would be allocated and, hence, shows their great believe in the promise of God. This is because this narrative is built on the hindsight of an older generation that had been punished because of disobedience to God. The daughters, thus, show a lot of faith and obedience in the promises and laws of God. It is probable that it was their obedience that led them to submit to the

laws promulgated by God without raising any doubt or objection. Though this extreme obedience, to some extent, can be likened to timidity which eventually results in the curtailment of their freedom; it also points to their reverence to those in authority. Subsequently, the narrative revealed that the daughters understood their context and so, remained silent when it was needed, compromised when necessary and spoke when appropriate.

In spite of all these positive traits, their silence after the initial request coupled with their lack of objections to the verdict from the elders' case deserves attention in this work. It can be argued that they became complacent after their victory and simply went to sleep expecting the male leaders to completely protect their interest. Thus, one may conclude that they were not in the know of the steps taken by the elders and so might have been taken unaware by the decision to cause them (daughters) to marry from their father's clan. The daughters succumbed to the ruling that came from the suit of the elders without raising any objection because they understood that it was a way to help protect their clan's inheritance as they sought to attain their self-worth. They were good members of their community and did not pursue their desire to the detriment of the needs of the other members in the community.

Hence, at the end of the narrative, it becomes clear that their patience and great understanding of their context helped them secure a land. They learnt a valuable lesson and from then on, monitored issues related to the allotment of land. Consequently, it was the daughters who were given the land in their name and not their husbands. This last achievement comes only after they took another step, breaking their silence. The next characters to be

discussed are the leaders of the tribe of Manasseh who also presented a suit in the narrative.

The Character of the Elders

The male elders of the clan of Zelophehad are also portrayed as being knowledgeable in the inheritance laws of the Israelites. Their knowledge in the laws enabled them anticipate the problems the new law would create for their tribe when the daughters got married outside their clan. The elders, due to their extensive knowledge of the inheritance laws, are able to show how the Jubilee law which was the last resort to keep tribal lands in the tribe could not even resolve the problem created by the daughters' inheritance.

Again, the way they presented their case is commendable. They adopted a strategy and chose an audience that best suited their case. They ignored the general congregation and chose the core leaders who could not be ignored in any important legislation. They presented their case in a similar manner to that of the daughters thus, portraying the narrator's intention of establishing the relationship between the narratives in Numbers 27:1-11 and 36:1-13. It is as if they were mimicking the daughters in a way to belittle every problem raised by the daughters. They proved to Moses and the chieftains gathered how the clans risked losing their inheritance if the daughters of Zelophehad were allowed to inherit their father. They envisaged that when the daughters got married, which was sure to happen, the fortunes of the clan could be negatively affected. Their approach, thus, compelled Moses and God to find a solution to the impending problem.

Another trait that can be deduced from the Elders is their confidence and courage. They can also be considered courageous because of their ability to bring up an issue that has already been dealt with by God and to remind him of the consequences of his decision. This is because the consequence of

challenging God and his chosen leaders was death and loss of inheritance, which I am sure the elders were aware of. But they still presented their case in anticipation of solving a future problem. Their strategy pay off when God supposedly declared them right and formulated a new law to further strengthen the clans hold on their inheritance.

Though the elders' courage is worth commenting on, it can be argued that they reacted to the daughters' victory due to the fact that they were going to lose the opportunity to inherit their brother because of his daughters. Thus, their victory came at a price for the daughters who lost the right to choose their husband from any tribe of their choice.

In spite of the efforts put up by the elders to protect clan inheritance and personal interest, it can be deduced from the narrative that they were selfish. They were not bothered by the issue of their kinsman losing his place among his family. They did not mind his name would vanish from the clan and only reacted when they felt threatened by the decision to preserve his name through his daughters. The narrative points to how their focus was on the preservation of the tribes land and not the preservation of their kinsman's name and identity.

Also, the elders were not good problem solvers. They were able to identify a problem but they did not provide a way for the problem to be solved. On the other hand, the daughters did not only identify the problem but went further to suggest the solution to the problem, something the elders did not do. They (the elders) simply complained without providing a solution.

They can also be described as not being very obedient since they did not even believe it was God who granted the daughters the right to inherit

(Numbers 36:1). Their doubts can be clearly seen in the way they addressed Moses and presented the two laws. The doubts of the elders and the issues raised by the daughters lead us to question the role Moses played in the narrative.

The Character of Moses

The character of Moses in this narrative is very difficult to deduce. Prior to this narrative, he is often referred to as the one who had the privilege to see God's face and speak to him face to face (De Vaux, 1965)

The authority and privileges Moses had is above that of the Priest and even all the leaders from the various tribes. However, in this narrative he is presented as being silent and as such can be perceived as a passive leader.

The narrative is silent on how Moses felt about the request of the daughters except he presented their case to God. Whether he did it out of his own volition or not cannot be easily deduced from the narrative. This is because the witnesses present during the daughters' presentation could have compelled Moses to act on the daughter's request. On the other hand, he could have prevented the daughters from speaking if he was against their presence at the place. In the long run it appears Moses was neither against nor for the daughters request and thus acted as the spokes person of God.

The narrative also reminds us of the special privilege of Moses by pointing out how he approached God and reported the daughters' case to him. He does not offer his opinion on God's verdict. Consequently he remained silent during the elders' presentation and only reported what God said to him.

In spite of the lack of details on the character of Moses in the narrative, it can be deduced that he was very obedient and tolerant. First, he did not

object to any of God's decisions and obediently reported it to the people. Also, he listened to all the cases of the people (daughters and elders) without any objection or interruption. Thus, he served as the link between God and the people. It is, therefore, laudable to perceive Moses as a humble leader who did not flaunt his power as the ultimate leader of all the clans and tribes.

However, Moses' silence and seeming ignorance in the inheritance laws is worth commenting. Moses should have anticipated the problems that the daughters' inheritance would present to the clans. Moses could have warned God but his silence points to two possible traits. It could either be that he was too timid of God to point out the problem or he lacked the knowledge to have known the problem the new law would have caused. Subsequently, if Moses did not know or was too timid to have spoken to God about it, then should not God, the formulator of the Israelites laws have known? This is because the narrator ensured that Moses and God only acted after something had happened. They did not take any initiative on their own. First, they acted after the daughters presented their case and secondly, they acted after the leaders presented their case.

The narrative, thus, confirms my view that Moses missed out on the consequences of the inheriting daughters getting married and might have felt relieved when he heard the leaders' case. Thus, Moses and God played reactionary roles in the narrative, that is, they only reacted to issues and did not take initiatives.

The Character of God

The first impression of God that can be deduced from the narrative is his indeterminate nature. When one expects him to act in a way, he acts differently and he appears not to be present in his Tent when expected.

In the first instance, the daughters presented their case in front of the Tent thinking that God was present but he appeared not to have been there at that time. The Tent of Meeting was revered by the Israelites because they believed God resided there. In the case of the daughters, he was not there and so Moses had to take the case to him. But, he seems to have been present at the meeting when the elders presented their case before Moses and the chieftains to have given an immediate response. Yet, during the elders' presentation, the Tent of Meeting was not even mentioned as the setting for the narrative. Thus, even though the Tent is believed to be the earthly abode of God, it appears in the narrative that there were times he was present and there were times he was absent.

Consequently, it is not surprising that the narrator makes God appear as one who is indecisive in the narrative. His initial reaction to the daughters request in the narrative shows his support and belief that the daughters can be as good as sons to inherit land. However, as I pointed earlier, his usage of $\text{! } \tau n$ and rb [points to his undisclosed intention that daughters can hold land only in trust in anticipation of a male heir (Mbuwayesango, 2003; Milgrom, 1990). He did not believe women could preserve the name of their fathers but they could serve as temporary holders until the original owners were born. This confirms assertions of scholars who argue that the daughters were used to solve a man's problem (Sakenfeld, 1995; Mbuwayesango, 2003). This is

because, for them (Sakenfeld, 1995; Mbuwayesango, 2003) the daughters were not the focus of the text from the very onset of the narrative. However, I disagree with them on that point because, throughout the narrative, it is the names of the daughters that are mentioned and not the elders or, later, their husbands. No heir is mentioned by name except for the daughters.

Further, this indecisive character of God develops in the narrative when he formulates a new law for both the daughters and the elders without considering the consequences for each law. First, in the case of the daughters, he grants them the right to inherit oblivious to the danger of the tribe losing some portions of land when the daughters get married outside their tribe.

Secondly, he causes the women to marry within their father's tribe without considering the effects this decision will have on the daughters' liberty to choose their husband. Thus, the narrator succeeds in painting a picture of an ignorant and forgetful God. This is because, if he remembered or knew of the details of the law, he would have made an exception that inheriting daughters must be allowed to keep their inheritance and not transfer it to their husbands upon marriage. This would have prevented the countersuit by the elders which denied the daughters the freedom to choose their husbands from any tribe they desired. It can be argued that it is the narrator in this narrative who knows everything to the extent that God's knowledge in the narrative is limited. However, in the end, the narrative explains that the decision of God is in line with his earlier command in Numbers 27:9 that each tribe should hold on to their land. God is, thus, presented as protecting the interest of the entire tribe including the daughters.

In spite of all these, God appears to be a very supportive character that encourages every one. He told the daughters they were right in asking for their father's inheritance and also adjudged the elders to also be right in seeking to protect the tribe's inheritance. He does not condemn any one and gives each group room to freely express themselves. Thus, one can argue that, even though women were not part of the leaders and those with power in the community, they were not prevented from presenting their problems to those in power.

Finally, he appears to be the ultimate authority in the narrative. His statements in the narrative portray him as having the final say in all matters as well as the problem solver among the people. When Moses seemed to be overwhelmed with the daughters' case, he refers to God who provides a solution that pleased the daughters. He is also referred to as the one who provided the solution to the elders' problem which also pleased the elders and the rest of the leaders present. He is the one who makes laws; so all the laws have his signature, "thus says the lord".

Consequently his views are respected, which makes him an important ally for any advocate. To be able to win, the full and not the partial support of the one with ultimate power can go a long way to help achieve success. How then do Ghanaian feminist readers appropriate the text into their context?

Analysis of Text from the Perspective of the Ghanaian Feminist Reader

The narrative of the daughters of Zelophehad presents a lot of pointers for young women in the Ghanaian society. As a Ghanaian from a typical matrilineal background where inheritance is traced through the female lineage, inheritance and access to family assets should not have been of concern to me

when I first read this text. However, the understanding that matrilineal is not matriarchy creates a gap for abuse (Oduyoye, 2000; Odotei, 2006).

The matrilineal system of inheritance is traced through the female lineage but it is not headed by females. The family head position (*abusua panyin*) in both the matrilineal and patrilineal system of inheritance is occupied by a man. The elderly women are part of the elders in the clan and so are consulted when crucial decisions are to be made. The young unmarried women in the clan, however, do not have any special place as compared to the elderly married ones. This means that in most cases some Ghanaian daughters, like the daughters in this narrative, neither has a voice or place in the society until they are married and have children (preferably sons). The daughters' case sets a good precedence for young women who fall into this group.

Another pointer is the fact that Ghanaian Christians tend to turn to the Bible for guidance when faced with oppressive customary laws because the Bible "... is regarded as the word of God capable of transforming life and addressing different life situation through faith..."(Masenya, 1998, p. 278). Consequently, daughters who face challenges and are Christians can easily fall on this narrative since, in my view, the daughters suggest an approach that can be used by women/men in situations where their rights are being ignored.

With the context established, I noticed that the names of the daughters are mentioned in all the three narratives but the elders of their father's clan do not get this attention from the narrator. The only names mentioned in addition to the names of the five women are Moses and Eleazer. Names have very important place among the Akans in particular and the Ghanaian society as a whole. To be given a name is to be given an identity and recognition of

existence among kinsmen. The repetition of the daughters' names in the narrative points to the pivotal role they played in the inclusion of daughters as part of those who can inherit.

Ghanaians place a lot of emphasis on the kind of names they give to their children because of the belief that the name given to a child influences her/his behaviour in the future (Mbiti, 1969). Hence, it is not surprising that the daughters achieved that success because they came from a political family; that is the tribe of Manasseh.

Mahlah and her sisters were not just referred to as the daughters of Zelophehad but they each had their names listed in the text. The role they played in solving a worrying trend in the society (their efforts to prevent names of men without sons from vanishing from their family lineage) cannot be easily overlooked or ignored. It is the names of the daughters that are mentioned and not those of the elders of their clan or their husbands. Because of the role they played, they changed their fate from being associated with a male figure to gaining self-worth and economic freedom.

The inheritance law has been with the Israelites since its inception but it took the courage of five named women to cause the change that was needed. Ghanaian daughters must therefore understand that abusive customary laws which ignore the place of daughters in the society are numerous and the only way out of this is a bold attempt to denounce such laws and proffer solution to them as the daughters' did in Numbers 27:1-11. Some of these abusive customary laws are the prohibitions placed on women because of menstruation, expressions in our communities used to refer to women as

inferior to men, widowhood rites, child marriage, female genital cutting, *Trokosi* and many others.

The narrative is clearly about the daughters and their overt bid to preserve their father's name and their covert bid to gain land (independence and wealth). It is their names that are mentioned right from the beginning of the narrative to the very end and not those of the elders. The verbs used for the daughters are very significant to the Ghanaian reader. At the very onset, the daughters are poised for action. They approach (*bɔɔ*), stand before (*dɔm*) and speak (*ɔm*). They take the initiative to approach the leaders at a gathering which can be likened to a court to present their case.

Among the Akan of Ghana, the chief and the council of elders are the adjudicators of justice in the traditional area (Awuah-Nyamekye, 2012; Gyekye, 1998). The chief's council is made up of the family heads (*abusuanpanyinfoɔ*) from the various clans in the traditional area, Queen mother and "in some cases respectable people in the community" (Awuah-Nyamekye, 2012, p. 83). Any decision the chief makes is done in consultation with his Council of Elders. In most cases, such councils are made up of only males with the exception of the Queen mother. Odotei (2006) explains that "in Ghana, the position of the chief, which is at the apex of traditional leadership, is most often occupied by men" (p.83).

However, in some traditional areas in the country, there are certain chieftaincy titles and sometimes, stools that have been reserved for women (Odotei, 2006). Moreover, there are some traditional areas that have women as chiefs but this is rare. In the Edina traditional area there are two extra women in the traditional council because they occupy stools that were given to their

fore fathers as a result of their heroism in the war with Cape Coast. The irony is that these women occupy stools that have male titles. Hence, support for women and their activities from fellow women are lacking, mostly because a lot of women do not occupy positions with power. Therefore, the need to lobby and win support of many people as the daughters of Zelophehad did is very important.

The gathering approached by the daughters of Zelophehad can be likened to the chief and his council among the Akans. The *abusuapanyin* handles the day to day affairs of the clan; so the chieftains can be likened to them. However, in Ghana, one cannot jump protocol and approach the chief and his elders without seeking audience through the *okyeame* (spokesperson of the chief). In the case of the narrative in Numbers 27: 1-2, the daughters just approached Moses and the leaders without seeking permission, but they were allowed to speak. This would have been problematic in an Akan traditional council because one needs permission before she can present her case to them. Respect for elders and laid down procedures must be fully followed before permission can be granted anyone to present a case before the chief and his council. Our traditional council has procedures that they expect people who come before them to strictly follow, lest they are thrown out of the court.

However, women are allowed to present their cases after following the proper procedures. Therefore, daughters can still present their grievances if only they will follow the laid down procedures. The chief mostly cannot take a decision without consulting the council of elders. Hence, it means that these elders whom the daughters bypassed would have been actively involved in the decision making.

Moses, the spokesperson of God, was the only one who presented the daughters case to God who, in turn, gave the ruling. The decision arrived at by the chief and his council is always announced by the *ɔkyeame* (*spokesperson*) to the people; however, the people must also accept the chief and his council's decision. For this reason, the *abusuapayin* (head of the clan) is always supposed to be in constant consultation with the people to seek their opinion on all issues discussed at the Council before a decision is attained (Coetzee & Roux, 2003; Gyeke, 1998). If the chief imposed his will on the people without proper consultation, it can lead to disagreements which when not checked can lead to sentiments that can eventually lead to the chief's de-stoolment.

It shows that, in the traditional court, the opinion of the people is as important as that of the chief and his council. The people can force the king makers to de-stool a chief who abuses his authority. Daughters today have two issues to grapple with if they want to effect a change in a defective policy. There are traditional authorities and political authorities that they have to win over. The chief and his council are the custodians of the customs in the society, but politicians today are the holders of political power. The Ghanaian daughter like the daughters of Zelophehad needs to identify the source of authority in their community. Who wields the power to assist in the change desired? Is it the chief and his council or the politician? A proper identification of the one who holds the ultimate power will lead to the development of the kind of strategy that will yield maximum results.

In this context, because the case is about land, and the chiefs are custodians of traditional lands in the traditional area, the initial step in seeking for access to land must begin with the chief and his council. The chief and his

council have the power to influence the clan head of the daughters' family to reconsider any stand taken so far. However, the *abusuapanyin* too has the power to influence the other council members to support his stance since he is already a member of the council and they may look favourably on him. The support of the members of the traditional area can compel the chief and his council to consider the daughter's request.

The next step to be taken after gaining the attention of the public, the chief and his council, is the presentation of the case. The daughters of Zelophehad used a variable (father and his name) which was common in appealing to their audience to develop their case. They also did not allow another person to speak on their behalf but rather spoke for themselves. Though there are various types of advocacy, what the daughters did is difficult to strictly place in a category. However, they were able to encourage themselves and speak for themselves which is close to what mobilization in advocacy stands for (World Bank Model, 2003). Mobilization is when people experiencing an abuse are able to come together and speak for themselves.

In spite of these classifications, what is important is good presentation of the case which will go a long way to achieve success. In order for a presentation to be good, it has to be well researched and properly planned. The knowledge exhibited by the daughters show their understanding of the inheritance laws they were challenging. Proper knowledge in the issue being pursued will ensure a good presentation which will win the support of the people present. The issue of a man's legacy vanishing among his relatives because he has no sons is a variable that humans do not have control over, hence, may be of concern to a lot of people present. Thus, daughters today

must investigate aspects of inheritance that denies daughters access to family land.

Access to land in an agrarian culture like ancient Israel, as argued before, can be likened to wealth, which consequently leads to economic freedom and freedom from suppressive cultural norms. Thus, today many issues militate against the progress of women in this direction which daughters must identify and present to those in authority in order to bring about the change they want. A good research and proper presentation can affect the chief, council of elders, community and, subsequently, the political authority to cause the change desired. However, any flaw in the presentation can lead to rejection, which will destroy the objective set.

One of such issues that work against women in their bid to own land is lack of education and, in most cases, their fear of traditional authority that control majority of land in the country. Though the PNDC Law 111 came to help women, especially, wives in situations where the husband died without leaving a will, lack of awareness on the existence of this will and in some cases, fear of the treatment the elders and people in the community will mete out to the widow and her children make it difficult for such victims to pursue those rights. Thus, not only do daughters in the Ghanaian community need education, they also need courage to face this opposition as the daughters of Zelophehad did. Hence, land which enables the daughters gain economic independence in the Israelite context is related to education of girls in this study. The research discovered that proper education in today's world enabled women gain control over their life and, therefore, put an end to the cycle of over dependence on male support.

Again, the daughters of Zelophehad, after presenting their problem with the inheritance law, proffered a solution. Their demand caused Moses to seek God (ultimate authority) for his opinion and reaction to the case. In the Ghanaian daughters' context, the chief and his councillors always confer among themselves to arrive at decisions. During such judicial settings, the stage for this extensive consultation is referred to as consulting *Abrewa Tia* (consulting the short old woman). *Abrewa Tia* in the traditional court represents a period for the chief and his elders to confer among themselves to arrive at a decision. The extent to which the consultation is done will ensure the support the people in the community will give to the decision taken. Though, this is the ideal scenario it is not always the case in the traditional court.

A good presentation alone cannot ensure positive results unless some follow-ups are done. The daughters of Zelophehad gave a great presentation but they went silent and so did not envisage the move by the leaders of their father's clan. In order to avoid a similar incidence from occurring, an advocate must build strong support system that can monitor the policy closely so that their aim can be achieved. This is because, sometimes, issues that bother on cultural reforms may take a long time and could easily be forgotten or abandoned. The allies and mass support will help sustain the confidence of the advocate and continue to pursue and not abandon the agenda. Since the sentiment of the public towards your cause is one of the powerful tools that can force those in authority to act on an unfair policy, their support cannot be overlooked.

Moreover, in situations where the chief and his council kowtow to an unjust customary practice, the constitution can come in handy to quash the stance of the traditional council. It is important for dialogue to continue even after the problem has been presented to those in authority.

In spite of my reservation about the way the elders went about presenting their case, they were also justified in fighting for their interest as the daughters of Zelophehad did. It means that not everyone will support you, no matter how significant the case is to the community. Though the daughters of Zelophehad appear to be protecting the name of all men who died without sons; they fought for daughters to also be included in those eligible to inherit. Nonetheless, their success could also result in permanent loss of clan inheritance which negatively affects the fortunes of the clan. This means that an advocate is a skilful negotiator who knows when to compromise and when not to give in. African feminists do not only seek their own freedom from the suppressive cultural norms but look out for the interest of both children and men. Their gains, therefore, bring harmony to the society and not disruption (Oduyoye, 1998; Okure, 1999). However, in situations where societal and religious perceptions on womanhood hamper women's progress, it cannot be negotiated or tolerated.

Though among the Akan, women are allowed to occupy some leadership positions in the traditional council, their roles are almost always secondary to that of the males and, in some other cases, they are not many to make significant impact on major decisions that are taken by the traditional council; especially, in situations that call for votes. Majority of *abusuapanyin* (clan heads), even in the Akan matrilineal system of inheritance, are males.

This all male caucus affect the extent to which women's interests are supported; especially, if these males feel threatened by the gains achieved by the women. This explains why we have some paramount chiefs who are women but they have never been elected to be part of the Regional and the National House of Chiefs. These women who are chiefs may be few but a conscious effort by the men would have given them a representation on this body but no such attempt has been made by either the other chiefs or the people in government. Neither have the executives and legislature amended that provision in the constitution for Queen mothers to be included in the body, in spite of the numerous calls from stakeholders and activists to do so (Odotei, 2006). Their absence is a clear indication of how systems in society can impede the fight of women against societal suppression.

The National and Regional House of Chiefs is the institutions that have been mandated by law to reform outmoded and suppressive customary laws and practices in Ghana. This constitutional body does not recognise Queen mothers who are viewed as "crucial to the governance of the traditional governance in our communities" (Odotei, 2006). Though Queen mother's play important roles in our chieftaincy institutions in the country, they do not have seats in the Statutory bodies of the National and Regional House of Chiefs (Odotei, 2006). Although, women can be part of this body if they are paramount chiefs in their traditional area, the reality is that the few women who are even paramount chiefs are not voted for to be part of such bodies. This means that when it comes to reforms of traditional practices that affect women, it is left in the hands of men who mostly benefit from these discriminatory laws. As a result, problems women face due to these customary

norms will persist until something is done about it. Women who read the Bible can learn from the daughters of Zelophehad and use advocacy to draw the attention of the government to deal with this gap in the law.

Some of the other social systems that support males over females are our customs, beliefs and practices. They place boundaries on the progress of women who seem to challenge traditional norms. Sometimes, those who embark on the journey are given bad names by both males and females in our communities. Women who decide to challenge elders in their families for their inheritance are mostly branded witches and threatened. The long period that legal litigation takes is mostly too costly and tiring for women who decide to fight for their inheritance in the court of law. In spite of this, women, especially, Christian women can find inspiration from the narratives on the daughters of Zelophehad.

Another encouraging thing about this narrative is the unity of the five sisters. The narrative presents them as one, therefore, pointing to oneness in purpose, vision and decision making. They appear to agree on all steps taken, which helps them achieve some level of success. Even though there is this adage that “women are their own enemies”, I believe this expression is part of society’s way of controlling women. Who gains when a woman loses out? The ones who benefit most if women disagree and become envious of each other are males, and so, they remain the beneficiaries of all these norms that prevent women from collaborating among themselves.

The 2010 population census in Ghana rated women as being in the majority, which makes the unity of women a threat to male superiority. However, for centuries, women have been made to believe their best allies are

men and not themselves, which only seem to benefit men. Hence, the narrative points to the progress women can make if they come together to reject these norms.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the daughters of Zelophehad and the leaders of the tribe of Manasseh both adopted an advocacy strategy which helped them achieve their aim of gaining land and protecting land respectively. It also revealed that the elders' strategy did not need many people as the daughters did because of the support they received from the society. The general analysis revealed the following issues:

First, being a woman in a vulnerable situation is not enough reason to win support of the society. The fact that you are a woman does not entitle you to anything unless you fight for it. The narrative shows that women have to take the initiative in drawing the attention of those in authority to deal with their situation and not the other way round. The only way to achieve success is to take the initial step and never stop in spite of the obstacles society will present to you. This is because the daughters of Zelophehad could have relied on their father's brothers to fight for the name of their brother but they did not. Obviously, the brothers were not bothered about Zelophehad's condition until they realised that the daughters' gain would affect the fortunes of the clan.

Secondly, there is "strength in unity", which can be clearly seen from the unity among the five daughters. Rarely do you see so many women working together on the same issue in the Bible, but it worked for them. The expression "women are their own enemies" is something that daughters today must strongly resist in order to form the group that can push for their freedom

from suppressive cultural and religious norms in the society. The courage of the daughters of Zelophehad can be deduced from their union and singleness of purpose. Who benefit most when women disagree among themselves? Is it women or men? This expression and many others in the society are all tools developed by patriarchy to confuse women and help suppress them in their progress for economic freedom.

Furthermore, the narrative shows that male support is good and needed if women can cause the change they desire. A lot of people in certain key positions in the process of changing defective laws are males who are even sometimes affected by this law. The support of these males must be won through lobbying and persistent pressure. However, it must be made clear to Ghanaian daughters that male help goes as far as it also benefits males; so true and complete help come from mobilising fellow women to help sustain the fight for change. If a woman's gain will affect the power of a man, it is likely that such a man will not fully support that woman and hence, it is best to gain more allies to help sustain and change a defective policy.

Finally the best approach to adopt to protect one's victory and prevent unexpected surprises is to anticipate and prepare for them. This can be done by engaging in dialogue with those in authority. Also, the interest of the populace must be sustained in order to keep the pressure on those in authority to act. Consequently, social media can serve as positive tool to help sustain the interest of the public which is the only way to keep the vision alive when it is being delayed by bureaucratic processes in our governance system.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter presents the summary of the entire study paying close attention to the various issues raised in the previous chapters. It also provides a conclusion to the entire study based on the objectives set for the study and then goes on to give some recommendations for further studies.

Summary

The study set out to explore how women can overcome cultural practices and religious beliefs that suppress them in order for them to achieve self worth and economic freedom. This study was developed on the desire of five women (daughters of Zelophehad) in a highly patriarchal context to acquire land which could be likened to wealth and independence. Based on their resolve to change their circumstance and gain economic freedom, they were able to confront and overcome the boundaries that culture and religion place in their path.

The study was designed to identify the strategy adopted by these women to achieve their goal of inheriting land for economic freedom. The study examined how advocacy as suggested by an article in the Daily Graphic could be used as a powerful tool by women in their fight against unfair customary laws. This is because, even though, today, there are Laws (PNDC Law 111) that seem to protect the interest of women in relation to inheritance,

some unfair customary laws continue to prevail which contribute to the loss of land by women (Gedzi, 2012).

The study, thus postulates that advocacy which happened to be used today by many advocates was used by the daughters of Zelophehad and the elders from the tribe of Zelophehad to cause a change in a law that was viewed as oppressive. Chapter one of the thesis revealed that in spite of the attention that the narrative on the daughters of Zelophehad had received from both feminist and literary scholars, little has been done to explore their action in the field of gender advocacy. Hence, the study sought to explore the steps taken by the daughters to gain access to land. The chapter also established that the context of the daughters did not permit inheritance by daughters and so the steps taken by them were rare and, hence, needed to involve a systematic approach which will help them achieve their goal.

The researcher's decision to explore the text from the perspective of gender advocacy and, later, from the perspective of a Ghanaian daughter was influenced by Sakenfeld (1988)'s argument that the method has an influence on the meaning derived from a text. The study affirmed that different approaches to the reading of biblical texts result in varied meanings.

Reader-response criticism was adopted as the method to reading the narratives in Numbers 27:1-11; 36 and Joshua 17:1-6. This method was adopted because;

... it is a critical practice that helps readers read with greater awareness and self-consciousness. As we become more aware of what we are doing (looking forward, looking back, filling gaps, resisting

androcentric undertones in the narrative) we become more aware of our response to our reading experience (Fowler, 2008, p. 81).

Thus, the method allowed an interaction between the text (in this case the narratives on the daughters Zelophehad) and a reader (who in this case is reading from the perspective of gender advocacy) to bring out the meaning in the text. The chapter also explored the importance of land and how ownership of land ensured the security and economic independence of women in the society. It is out of the desire to acquire land (a property that can be equalled to wealth and independence in a patriarchal culture) that pushed the five women to take the steps being likened to strategies used by gender advocates today.

Due to the important role that gender advocacy played in the research, chapter two explored what advocacy is and how advocates mostly go about their business. A working definition was adopted and the steps/strategies they mostly employ in fighting for their rights in the society were discussed. The chapter revealed that the context of advocacy played an important role in the way problems are identified and pursued in the community. The chapter concluded that advocacy is not a spontaneous reaction to a problem but rather a process that people suffering from unfair customary laws, practices and religious beliefs can use to turn things around. It also established that one of the best ways an advocacy can yield result is when it is properly strategised.

Chapter three laid the basis for analysing the issues that came out of reading the narratives on the daughters of Zelophehad, from the perspective of a Ghanaian daughter (a daughter who cannot inherit her father). For this reason, the study traced the history of feminist biblical studies over the years

paying close attention to how the various types of feminist readings evolved. The study revealed the important role that context and experience of women over the years have affected the type of hermeneutical approach they use to read the Bible.

It further established that, the difference between feminist biblical criticism and Womanist criticism was because of the conviction of African American women that issues that were of importance to them (racism, class, poverty etc) were not addressed by their white counterparts (Weems, 1988). The study revealed the difficulties that scholars, both in and outside the African continent, have encountered in their attempts to give an umbrella name to feminist criticism (Mbuwayesango, 2003; Oduyoye, 2000; Okure, 1999). The study established that there was no need for an umbrella term since women on the African continent and around the world can never have the same experiences due to the difference in culture, religion and beliefs. What was needed was a clarification of what one means by feminist reading or a Womanist reading of a text. The study established that the way one approaches a text has a profound effect on the meaning that can be drawn from the text.

Chapter three, therefore, concluded that reading the narratives on the daughters of Zelophehad from the perspective of a gender advocate who is a feminist reader will go a long way to influence the meaning that will be drawn from the reading of the text.

Chapter four conducted an exegesis of the chosen narratives. The exegesis established that these three different chapters (Numbers 27:1-11; 36:1-13 and Joshua 17:1-6) explain the process the daughters went through in

order to gain land. The exegesis established that the daughters developed a plan which they followed through to protect their interest. The reading also revealed the obstacles that the daughters had to overcome in order to achieve their goal. The exegesis showed that advocacy was an age long practice which has been given a modern name. The daughters of Zelophehad and the elders from the clan of Zelophehad may not have been aware of the existence of this tool but they appeared to have applied its principles well. The strategy adopted by both the daughters and elders reveals their in-depth knowledge about the principles enshrined in advocacy, which advocates today, especially, Bible readers and believers can learn from.

It further revealed how context and culture can shape the way one approaches, presents and defends an issue. The exegesis established the active role the daughters played in re-writing their story even in the face of extreme difficulty. Consequently, the reading disproved arguments by scholars such as Sakenfeld (1988), and Mbuwayesango (2003) that the daughters of Zelophehad were only performing the roles of men per their request and results achieved. This was because, as the study revealed, one of the principles advocates employ when negotiating for a change is compromise which seems to reflect what the daughters did when they accepted to marry their cousins. Some scholars argue that since the daughters agreed to marry their cousins, they did not really gain anything but this study intimates that, since, the daughters gained land, which give them control over their lives, they thus, achieved success. It was further revealed that the daughters understood their context and so knew when to speak and when they needed to keep silence.

They, therefore, adopted the best strategy to present their case which made it impossible for the male leaders to ignore.

Chapter five discussed the various characters in the narrative and also compared the strategy used by the daughters and elders from the clan of Zelophehad. The study revealed the important role that the male support system plays in the fight of women against unfair customary laws. The elders of the clan of Zelophehad, Moses and God appeared to openly support the case of the daughters; however, the study revealed that males support for females lasted as long as it did not affect their power in the society.

It further revealed that women who embarked on cultural, religious and social reform should be careful not to leave it in the hands of males without doing constant follow ups. This is because, as the study revealed, the daughters of Zelophehad were not invited when the elders presented their case and also had to remind Joshua and Eleazer of God's ruling before their land was given to them. The study emphasised that while the makeup of the patrilineal societies naturally makes men to be more powerful, it makes women to be weaker.

Subsequently, when the Ghanaian feminist perspective was applied to the issues raise in the reading, it revealed that the matrilineal system of inheritance was not hostile to women but rather allowed women to inherit land since the lineage of the clan was traced through them. Thus, unlike the patrilineal system that prohibited inheritance of women the matrilineal system ensured they did otherwise. However, the study revealed that daughters with fathers in matrilineal system could also not inherit their fathers according to the customary laws of the clan. It was also established that, in spite of the

system of inheritance one belongs to in Ghana, males are the most powerful and, therefore, have access to majority of the lands in the clan since they were either the heads of the family or occupied stools in the clan. Oduyoye (2000) and many other Ghanaian feminist scholars have argued that a matrilineal definition of who have the right to inherit or not to inherit in the family does not imply a matriarchal power structure over that family. Chiefs and tribal leaders in matrilineal system of inheritance are mostly males and hold the final authority in the sales and ownership of land.

Thus, it was revealed that, whether patrilineal or matrilineal systems of inheritance, women are always left out of the power structure in the society.

Owing to the above situations, I argue that these suppressive structures can be overturned if deliberate systematic steps are taken. Advocacy, therefore, was and still is a powerful tool which can be used by groups of people especially women to overturn some of these customary practices and negative societal perspectives that work against the economic freedom of women.

Findings

The study came out with the following findings:

The daughters of Zelophehad and the elders of the clan of Zelophehad indirectly applied the strategies used by gender advocates today to solve an age-old problem in their society.

The daughters were able to achieve their success because they learnt the weaknesses of the inheritance law and strategized how best to approach those in authority to gain an audience that will help them achieve their aim. Education in the inheritance law, therefore, served as a powerful ingredient for

the success achieved by the daughters. Thus, it is prudent for women to be given education, especially, in the inheritance laws of the country.

The study also portrayed God as one who listens to the cries of the poor and oppressed in the society. God's desire to establish a harmonious society was clear in the way he handled the two cases brought before him in the narrative. Hence, Christians who use the Bible can learn to approach issues in ways that can promote harmony and equity in the society.

The study further intimated that, even though authorities may not always be receptive to demands by advocates, a well researched problem based on the context of advocates can push authorities to place their objections aside, in order to help proffer a solution that will benefit all in the society.

It also showed that since the narratives on the daughters of Zelophehad are within the Bible, Bible believers can learn from the daughters in situations where God has been used to prevent women from pursuing their rights in relation to the acquisition of land and inheritance. Thus, the study established the need for the church to add the narratives on the daughters of Zelophehad to their lectionaries so that members can know and learn from it.

Conclusion

The overriding objective of this study has been to establish how the tool of advocacy can be used to change age long suppressive cultural practices among our society. The term advocacy appeared to be modern but the study revealed that it has been in existence for a long time and was successfully applied by five women to re-write the laws on inheritance in ancient Israel.

The goal of the research has stemmed from the lack of interest by scholars to explore the basis of the success gained by the daughters of

Zelophehad. My argument in response to the above is that the daughters of Zelophehad adopted and applied a strategy that enabled them gain land (economic freedom). Every step and incident that unfolded in the process of gaining this independence was systematically planned and deliberately followed to the end. This conclusion was arrived at after I employed a different approach to the reading of an overly read narrative by feminist scholars. After reading the narratives on the daughters of Zelophehad from the perspective of gender advocacy, I discovered that the strategy they adopted had an influence on every step they took in pursuing their case.

Scholars, for years, have praised these women for their success and have even classified them as true heroes, but they (scholars) often ignore the discipline and dedication of these women towards gaining economic freedom. Being women and most especially, unmarried daughters, they found themselves on the fringe of power in the society but through careful study, discipline and dedication, they were able to change their situation. The daughters of Zelophehad were vulnerable because they were without any male protection but that did not prevent them from pursuing their goal of gaining economic freedom. Their approach forced Moses and God to take a second look at the inheritance law.

One important thing that emerges from the narrative is the number of times the names of the daughters were mentioned as compared with the male figures. The narrative is clearly about the daughters and not the elders and neither is it about their father nor the husbands they married later. Their names were mentioned four times in the entire narrative, which is impressive for a society that hardly talks about women. The narratives are about how five

women with knowledge on the gaps in an inheritance law; were able to plan and execute a strategy to attain self-worth, independence and security.

The success of these women was greatly influenced by the age long saying that “unity is strength”. The names of the daughters, throughout the narrative are mentioned together and in no circumstance did they seek individual interest. They approached, presented, pursued and achieved their goal together. This singular feat also challenges the age long adage that “women are their own enemies”. The study revealed that the five women stayed together, depicting the establishment of a bond of trust and togetherness, which helped to sustain their goal over the long period it took. They gained strength by staying together, which is a valuable lesson for people going through difficulties.

Finally, the daughters of Zelophehad did not achieve mere success over an unfair law but they established a system or strategy that can be adapted by groups of people suffering from discriminatory customary laws in the society. I used the word ‘adapt’ and not ‘adopt’ because the daughters proved that context and the social structure of the advocate must be seriously taken into consideration before, during and after presentation and pursuing of the case. Hence, Bible believers can gain inspiration from the narratives on the daughters of Zelophehad to pursue their rights in the court of law since God adjudge it to be right.

Recommendations

Based on the study, I recommend the following:

The importance of awareness and education in advocacy demands that the narratives on the daughters of Zelophehad be given more attention in our churches today. This is because when more women are exposed to such stories, they will be encouraged to pursue their inheritance cases in court since God supported the daughters of Zelophehad. Based on this I recommend that the narratives on the daughters of Zelophehad should be added to Bible study materials in the church to help educate members.

The approach of analyzing biblical texts from the perspective for gender advocacy could be applied to other texts in the Bible, to help generate new meanings which can assist people experiencing all manner of religious and cultural discrimination.

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