



THE VIEWS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT ON FEMALE SEXUALITY

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Sexuality is one of the most central issues in one's life. As religion deals with all aspects of the human in all stages of life, it has always influenced sexuality and still continues to do so. To interfere with such an intimate issue definitely requires a high sense of responsibility on the part of religion, and especially *from* those, who are representing this religion in an authoritative way.¹ There is almost no other field, in which restricting interventions may so severely damage someone's vitality and mental health, as it is in the case of sexuality.

Being aware of this, it should be noticed likewise, that religious regulations and norms are formulated and accepted by human believers, who pass down customs,² transforming these by adapting them to new social situations and human conditions. Therefore, ethic concepts of revealed religions were never static systems with nothing but unchallengeable commandments, but vivid social constructions help people to find one's way in life. Although, in history and in many countries today, for individuals with behaviors or sexual orientations declared as deviant, often the opposite was and is the case.

Based only on the facts

- that there are more than two sexes, but normally in religions only two – male and female – are accepted,
- that these two sexes are, especially in religions, related strongly to gender stereotypes up until today,

¹ This was strongly the case in the Roman Catholic Synod of Bishops concerning matrimony and family, which took place in October 2015 in Rome. The *lineamenta*, the leading document for preparing this synod, is quietly ambivalent and clearly shows a compromise of very divergent opinions.

² The issue of »Biblical ethics«, as it is discussed today for example by WILLIAM C. SPOHN, *What Are They Saying About Scripture and Ethics*. Fully Revised and Expanded Edition, New York 1995; or LÚGÁS CHAN, *Biblical Ethics in the 21st Century*. Developments, Emerging Consensus and Future Directions, New York 2013; problematizes the way in which biblical texts may be applied to current ethical issues. Working on a rather large project on gendered reception-history (see www.bibleandwomen.org), I would suggest using the concept of reception also for this hermeneutical question: IRMTRAUD FISCHER, *Gender Issues in Biblical Ethics. On the Reception of Old Testament Texts for a Sexual Ethics in Gender-Democratic Societies*, in: JAMES KEENAN (ed.), *The Bible and Catholic Theological Ethics in the World Church*, *Catholic Theological Ethics in the World Church* 5, Maryknoll, NY 2017, forthcoming.

– that not everybody has the same access to economic resources and decision-making, and moral regulations concerning sexuality may not be equal for anyone at all times.

They should rather be taken as ethical guidelines, which indicate the target course of human comportment. The *social context* has to be taken into consideration, not only for today's sexual ethics, but in particular, for such varying views on sexual issues as encountered in OT texts. These were produced in the course of almost a millennium, and certainly at various places and cultures; in different contexts such as the Iron Age Israel, the exile in Babylon or the diaspora in Hellenistic Alexandria.

I. DIVERSITY AS THE KEY TO THE UNDERSTANDING OF OLD TESTAMENT TEXTS ABOUT SEXUALITY

Recently, Carol L. Meyers³ has opted for abandoning the category of »patriarchy« as an explanatory scheme of society in Ancient Israel. She did so by arguing that women in those times had to do such essential work for surviving everyday life, that it was impossible for them to have such limited power and rights. Taking this into consideration, I first would like to argue that we have too many examples of societies until nowadays (the Talibans' Afghanistan or the terrorist group ISIS!), where women still have the same importance for maintenance without having an appropriate status according to their contribution in society.

Secondly, I never defined patriarchy simply as the regime of men, but as a hierarchical social system based on the criteria of intersectionality.⁴ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, who strongly pointed out intersectionality in her research,⁵ also opted against the term »patriarchy«. Instead, she introduced »kyriarchy«.⁶ I would like to emphasize that in Ancient Israel's society »age« was such an important category that for defining ancient societies we should take this aspect into consideration.

³ CAROL L. MEYERS, Was Ancient Israel a Patriarchal Society?, in: JBL 133 (2014) 1, 8–27.

⁴ I discussed this in several publications; for the English-speaking context see IRMTRAUD FISCHER/MERCEDES NAVARRO PUERTO/JORUNN ØKLAND/ADRIANA VALERIO, Introduction – Women, Bible, and Reception History. An International Project in Theology and Gender Studies, in: IRMTRAUD FISCHER/MERCEDES NAVARRO PUERTO/ANDREA TASCHL-ERBER (eds.), Torah, The Bible and Women Vol. 1.1, Atlanta 2011, 1–30, 9–10.

⁵ Cf. ELISABETH SCHÜSSLER FIORENZA, In Memory of Her. A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins, New York 1983, 29f.

⁶ ELISABETH SCHÜSSLER FIORENZA, But She Said. Feminist Practices in Biblical Interpretation, Boston 1993, 122f.; cf. EAD./LAURA NASRALLAH (eds.), Prejudice and Christian Beginnings. Investigating Race, Gender, and Ethnicity in Early Christian Studies, Minneapolis 2009.

Biblical society⁷ was coined by the right of the first-born male. In an extended family there was always only *one* man, the first-born of the first-born, who had the genealogical legitimation and the power to decide in all external issues of its members, male or female, young or old, including children and slaves. But being male and the oldest in relation to the same generation is relevant in the case of a power-position *only* if someone is *free*. Neither a male nor a female slave does have any personal rights; their rights are subsumed under the rights of their masters or mistresses. Being free or unfree in ancient societies is therefore a much more decisive feature than being male or female, native or stranger, healthy, ill or disabled⁸ or member of the dominant, deviant or foreign religion. All these categories have an influence on the status of a person and the validation of each person is based on these criteria. The first criterion mentioned always discriminates positively, the second negatively. Being a healthy, free, rich, native, first-born male, who worships the god of Israel, will provide the subject with high social standard. A poor, old, foreign slave-woman, who is sick from hard work and adores foreign deities, is bound to end up at the lowest step of society.

Discussing information on female sexuality in biblical texts therefore means to take into account all these social features of a presumed legal person in *legislative texts*, which to a certain degree might not be *descriptive* but *prescriptive* and trying to establish a manner that, up to the formulation, was not common. We should have in mind these issues of intersectionality when reading *biblical narratives* with all their carefully created figures, or texts with *metaphorical use* of aspects of female sexuality.

Moreover, one has to be aware of this when judging a behavior ethically: who was able to refuse sexual contacts in biblical times and who was able to claim these without consequences for his moral reputation? Are special practices such as prostitution not caused rather by extreme poverty than by illegitimate lust? Was sexuality in high age or before the wedding ceremony really condemned in these societies as it was the longest time in Christianity? Are biblical texts inherently biased along the lines of these criteria or do only we, as interpreters, introduce gender- and cultural bias? Questions like these are omnipresent when dealing with views of female sexuality in biblical texts.

⁷ I would like to define »biblical society« as an expression for all societies, in which biblical texts were written and passed on up to the closing of the canon of the Hebrew Bible and the composition of the Septuagint texts, which were added to the Old Testament by the pre-reformation churches.

⁸ In the OT, health and sanity are reasons for discrimination, therefore I would like to insert these criteria into intersectionality-concepts for analyzing biblical texts; for the following arguments see my article IRMTRAUD FISCHER, Was kostet der Exodus? Monetäre Metaphern für die zentrale Rettungserfahrung Israels in einer Welt der Sklaverei, in: JBTh 21 (2006), 25–44. Age discriminates positively if someone is free, but negatively if someone is unfree. A young slave can be exploited longer and better for his strength than an old one. For age and gender concerning slavery cf. also IRMTRAUD FISCHER, Die Erzeltern Israels. Feministisch-theologische Studien zu Gen 12–36, BZAW 222, Berlin 1994, 90–102.

2. FROM *SEXUALITY* TO »*GENDERALITY*«

As for Old Testament texts, sexual nature is oriented toward the unification of man and woman. Yet, the two creation narratives in Gen 1 and 2⁹ are not able to consider mankind other than being male and female. Other physical sexual dispositions or orientations are not in view of the creation stories and are considered by some legal texts as deviation, and therefore generally forbidden if not concealed.

Sexuality is one of the fundamental tasks of humankind, as in Gen 1,28 God orders mankind first of all to »be fruitful and multiply« and, after this, to subdue the earth and rule over non-human creature. While Gen 1 places its focus on procreation, Gen 2 emphasizes the delightful carnal relationship of the couple (cf. Gen 2,23–25).¹⁰ Men and women are created for helping each other – this is the sense of עֵינֶר כְּנִגְדּוֹ –,¹¹ because *adam*, »the human being«, becomes aware of his sex only in confrontation with the other sex. Only after the creation of the woman, comes man into existence, before this there was the sexually undifferentiated *adam*. A human being longs for carnal unification with the other sex, to go back to the condition before the creation of the two sexes. Heterosexuality therefore is presented as the God-given norm and sexuality in general is held as nothing but good, because it is seen as inherent in creation.

While the stories of Gen 1 and 2 present the gender-relationship according to God's original plan, Gen 3 describes the realistic way of life of man and woman in a world outside of Paradise. Sexuality here is as important as it was before, however male desire is not answered by female desire as in Gen 2, but female lust is responded to by male domination (Gen 3,16). This describes precisely what living in a patriarchal society means: men dominate women of the same social status, and also women with lower social status. Sexuality, established as creatural task *between equals*, is turned into a *hierarchical gendered* field of permissiveness and prohibition, in which men control women, and especially their sexuality. *Sex-uality* is perverted into »*gender-ality*« and does not exist without gender-hierarchy. In almost all biblical texts, eroticism and intercourse are

⁹ Dealing with sexuality, one has to begin with the creation narratives; already the fundamental book by PHYLLIS TRIBLE, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, OBT 2, Philadelphia 1978, did so.

¹⁰ On gender-issues in Gen 1–3 I wrote several articles, to which I would like to refer to, for the discussion of traditional as well as feminist publications: IRMTRAUD FISCHER, *Egalitär entworfen – hierarchisch gelebt. Zur Problematik des Geschlechterverhältnisses und einer gender-fairen Anthropologie im Alten Testament*, in: BERND JANOWSKI/KATHRIN LIESS (eds.), *Der Mensch im alten Israel. Neue Forschungen zur alttestamentlichen Anthropologie*, HBS 59, Freiburg i.Br. 2009, 265–298; EAD., *Der Mensch lebt nicht als Mann allein... Kann eine biblische Anthropologie gender-fair sein?*, in: SIGRID EDER/IRMTRAUD FISCHER in cooperation with PATRICK MARKO (eds.), »...männlich und weiblich schuf er sie...« (Gen 1,27): *Zur Brisanz der Geschlechterfrage in Religion und Gesellschaft*, TKD 16, Innsbruck/Wien 2009, 14–28.

¹¹ Cf. WALTHER VOGELS, »It Is not Good that the »Mensch« Should Be Alone; I Will Make Him/Her a Helper Fit for Him/Her« (Gen 2:18), in: *EeT(O) 9* (1978), 9–35, 20f.

depicted under male hegemony; perhaps the Song of Songs is in some verses the major exception. This reflects reality in most of the societies until today.

3. MOTHERHOOD – FEMALE PROCREATION

In the classical marriage doctrine of the Catholic Church,¹² sexuality takes place only between a married, heterosexual couple. The primary purpose of matrimony – and obviously also of sexuality – is the production of an offspring.¹³ Before Vaticanum II, the collateral effect of this inevitable use of sexual practice was defined as »remedium concupiscentiae«, remedy against sexual desire. Fulfilling these aims, a man and a woman help each other as provided in Gen 2.

Considering the general living conditions in the ancient Near East (e.g. under-feeding and malnutrition, lack of a health care system and skilled birth attendance and the very high death rate of children) there may be no doubt that procreation was a target value of sexuality. In a society, in which at certain times it was necessary to give birth up to five children, so that one of them would be able to reach the age of reproduction,¹⁴ children were always welcome – with one exception: descendants resulting from adultery (cf. Wis 3,16–19).

For this reason, the Old Testament has sometimes earned the fame to see women (only) as birth-machines¹⁵ – having in mind especially the story of Lea and Rachel in Gen 29,31–30,24, where in every line the birth of a *male* child is narrated. But if we read the ancestry-stories focusing on the aspect of the birth-rate, it comes to light that Lea with her seven children is the great exception between the ancestresses: Hagar and Sara have only one child, Rebecca, Tamar, Silpa and Bilha two, and Rachel is dying in parturition of her second son. All in all, births per woman as we have it today in western societies!

Because of viri-local matrimony, having a son is the assurance against almost all disadvantages in life: while girls leave their parents for alliance, sons rest in the patriarchal household, supporting their own parents when they become sick, old, disabled, or, in case of a mother, divorced or widowed. This is certainly the reason why many biblical stories about women depict them as not only longing for

¹² Can. 1013 CIC/1917 O 1: »Matrimonii finis primarius est procreatio atque educatio prolis; secundarius mutuum adiutorium et remedium concupiscentiae.«

¹³ Cf. for the purpose of marriage in CIC 1917 (can 1013 § 1), where the production of an offspring was the main purpose, to help each other against concupiscence was the second. Influenced by the doctrine of Vaticanum II, the CIC 1983 defines matrimony in a more personal way: the well-being of the spouses is as important as procreation and the education of children (can. 1055 § 1).

¹⁴ Cf. CAROL L. MEYERS, *Discovering Eve. Ancient Israelite Women in Context*, Oxford 1988; revised version: EAD., *Rediscovering Eve. Ancient Israelite Women in Context*, Oxford 2013, 99.

¹⁵ A feminist interpretation of these stories and a short introduction to marriage customs is given in my book IRMTRAUD FISCHER, *Women Who Wrestled with God. Biblical Stories of Israel's Beginnings*, Translated from the second German edition into English by Linda M. Maloney, Collegeville 2005, 72–80.

the enjoyment of sexuality or being the beloved of their husbands, but as longing for a son. That is the case with Rachel, who believes that she is going to die without children (Gen 30,1f.), and also with Hanna, the later mother of Samuel (1Sam 1,1–10). They both live in a polygamous matrimony, which brings to light that the woman is infertile, not her husband.¹⁶ Nobody is surprised about this under the psycho-social conditions in Ancient Israel, where proliferation is always seen as God's blessing (cf. the blessing in the creation order Gen 1,28 and its fulfilment in Ex 1,7; as well as the promise to the ancestors in Gen 15,1–5; 22,17f; 24,60). But we have to emphasize, that the Bible does not define only female sexuality as having its completion in offspring; the opposite is true when Abraham laments *first* to have no progeny (Gen 15,1–3), but it is only after this that Sara makes the decision to get a child through Hagar (Gen 16,1f.).

4. SEXUALITY AS SENSUAL PLEASURE

Erotic texts from almost all epochs and cultures demonstrate that sexuality was not only committed to the purpose of progeny, but was also always seen as playful pleasure. Against biased opinion, ancient cultures focused not only on male lustfulness, although most of the erotic texts and love songs passed down to us were probably written by men. Athalya Brenner¹⁷ has shown more than twenty years ago, that in the Song of Songs the voice of the woman prevails over that of the male figure, and her speech is not chaster than her companion's. Those poems offer a language full of desire, describing nakedness without shame and prudery, putting sexual indulgence into the center without ever speaking of children or matrimony. It seems to be an unwed couple (Song 8,1f.), who enjoys sexuality at its best, without restriction of norms and customs, but in intimacy and affection.¹⁸ Such delight is only possible if both are able to give and to receive in equality and the female partner does not have to be aware of her honor, which eventually may be lost or diminished in erotic surrender.

Although formulated from an androcentric perspective, Eccl 9,9 also expresses this similarly: enjoy life with a woman you love (עִם־אִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר־אַהַבְתָּ). The preposition עִם shows that only *together* – and not in dominance or demand and least of all

¹⁶ There is evidence that in biblical times they were also aware of male infertility (cf. Gen 20,17; Deut 7,14). Cf. IRMTRAUD FISCHER, *Schaff mir Kinder – wenn nicht, so sterbe ich!* (Gen 30,1). *Von weiblicher Sexualität, Schwangerschaft und Mutterschaft im Alten Testament – und dem gender-bias bei der wissenschaftlichen Auslegung von Frauentexten*, in: ANKE ROHDE/ANITA RIECHER-RÖSSLER (eds.), *Psychische Erkrankungen bei Frauen. Psychiatrie und Psychosomatik in der Gynäkologie*, Regensburg 2001, 17–26.

¹⁷ ATHALYA BRENNER, *Women Poets and Authors*, in: ATHALYA BRENNER (ed.), *A Feminist Companion to the Song of Songs*, FCB 1, Sheffield 1993, 86–97, 89f.

¹⁸ Pointing out the erotic dimension of the Song of Songs, does not mean abnegating the metaphorical and allegorical dimension, which points to the love between God and mankind. Cf. for this concept: LUDGER SCHWIENHORST-SCHÖNBERGER, *Das Hohelied der Liebe*, Freiburg i. Br. 2015, 11–25.

with violence – is sexuality pure lust that delights all day long without reason and purpose. Ideally, Vat II in *Gaudium et Spes* 48,1 means this by the phrase »intima communitas vitae et amoris coniugalis«.

5. RESTRICTED FEMALE SEXUALITY

Such wonderful texts let us forget for a while that, on the other hand, there is much evidence that female sexuality was strictly regulated. In times without DNA-tests it was reserved only for the husband to make sure that his wife bears only his children, who inherit the whole patrimony after him. That a girl must be a virgin before betrothal/wedding (Deut 22,13–21)¹⁹ and that a widow or a captive in war has to wait for a month (Deut 21,10–14) before remarriage, also serves the same purpose, obviously to show that she is not pregnant from the former husband. By doing this, the new partner has a guarantee for his paternity. While men are allowed to have intercourse with several women at the same time, this is strictly prohibited for a wife. Looking at biblical texts, polygyny was not a very widespread phenomenon, but it was an option. For women, only *successive* polyandry is legally provided (allowed?) and morally accepted. From the regulation that priests are not allowed to marry a prostitute or a divorcée (Lev 21,7f.), but only the high-priests have to marry a virgin (Lev 27,13–15), it can be deduced that a woman is not to be rejected for a second marriage: a life without vivid sexuality is obviously not a fulfilled one.

6. THE VULNERABILITY OF FEMALE SEXUALITY

The vulnerability of female sexuality is evidently very much higher than that of the male one. Although we have instances of the rape of males (cf. Gen 19,5; Josh 19,22), the phenomenon is much less diffused than the rape of women. In both cases, men are the delinquents and the reason for the crime is not sexual desire, but the urge to dominate and to humiliate.²⁰ Sexual harassment or assault (cf. Susanna by the elders: Dan 13; Batsheba by King David: 1 Sam 11) and violence did probably not occur more rarely than in our societies, although with a slightly different focus. Rape of females takes place in family, even at the royal court (2 Sam 13), and it is a common practice in war – until nowadays to humble the defeated (male) enemy.²¹

¹⁹ Under this aspect is to be understood what wisdom literature like Sir 7,24 says about unmarried daughters: her father has to have a look on their chastity, not because this is of value per se, but to hand over to the son in law a woman with whom he may create his genealogical line without risk.

²⁰ ILSE MÜLLNER, *Tödliche Differenzen. Sexuelle Gewalt als Gewalt gegen andere* in Ri 19, in: LUISE SCHOTTROFF/MARIE-THERES WACKER (eds.), *Von der Wurzel getragen. Christlich feministische Exegese in Auseinandersetzung mit Antijudaismus*, BiInS 17, Leiden 1996, 81–100.

²¹ Cf. CLAUDIA RAKEL, *Judit – über Schönheit, Macht und Widerstand im Krieg. Eine feministisch-intertextuelle Lektüre*, BZAW 334, Berlin 2003, 57–62.

But in the Old Testament like in the Ancient Near East sexual violence is also seen as a punishment for (sexual) misbehavior. This we do not learn from biblical narratives, but indirectly from metaphorical speech or prophetic fulmination (Ezek 23,26ff., Amos 8,17²²). Especially in texts where a city or a country is personified as a woman,²³ conquer is depicted as sexual violence in all forms: psychic, physical and social abasement is described in every detail (cf. Ezek 16.23), so that Athalya Brenner may speak of »prophetic pornography«.²⁴ Even if these texts are not describing a historical event, metaphors show what was possible – if not customary – in those times.

7. FEMALE SEXUALITY IN METAPHORIC LANGUAGE

To picture rape in such a way on the one hand, may be interpreted as resistance to forget the crime, as proposed by liberation theology.²⁵ By naming the crime and the evildoer the common mechanism of victim blaming is avoided and a voice is given to the humbled.

But on the other hand, having such texts in the Holy Scripture means, that people get familiar with such practices. Especially when God orders rape or does not prevent it, believers are in risk to legitimate rape – »even God orders this!«. Although, in such texts the violated female represents the *whole* community, men as well as women, women are much deeper affected than males, because metaphorical language symbolizes only *female* sexuality and its vulnerability. Sexual infidelity as sign for unfaithfulness against God is depicted only with female sexuality,²⁶ leaving a bitter aftertaste. Although it is not the main aim, but women are blamed more by this metaphor than men, and reception history shows that almost always only female sexuality was problematized as being at moral risk.

²² Amos 8,17 demonstrates that prostitution was in biblical times also often the last option to survive.

²³ CHRISTL MAIER, *Daughter Zion, Mother Zion: Gender, Space and the Sacred in Ancient Israel*, Minneapolis 2008.

²⁴ ATHALYA BRENNER, On »Jeremiah« and the Poetics of (Prophetic?) Pornography, in: ATHALYA BRENNER/FOKKELIEN VAN DIJK-HEMMES (eds.), *On Gendering Texts: Female & Male Voices in the Hebrew Bible*, BiInS1, Leiden 1996, 178–193.

²⁵ For this hermeneutics see ELISABETH SCHÜSSLER-FIORENZA, *Bread not Stone. The Challenge of Feminist Biblical Interpretation*, Boston 1985.

²⁶ Although the reason for this is not misogyny, reading such texts blames constantly only female sexuality. Violence against the unfaithful wife is the other (ugly) side of the medal of the metaphor-complex that depicts the covenant as the marital relation of God and his people (cf. IRMTRAUD FISCHER, *Isaiah. The Book of Female Metaphors*, in: LUISE SCHOTTROFF/MARIE-THERES WACKER (eds.), *Feminist Biblical Interpretation. A Compendium of Critical Commentary on the Books of the Bible and Related Literature*, Grand Rapids, MI 2012, 303–318).

8. CONCLUSION

During the last decade, feminist exegetes dedicated much attention to female sexuality, mainly to violence against women,²⁷ a field formerly almost of no interest in biblical interpretation as well as in Christian ethics. This brings to light again that theological ethics dealt generally with *male* issues²⁸ when speaking of *anthropological* issues. As sexual harassment and violence in general and specifically against women today did not disappear from the agenda, churches would be well advised to spearhead advocacy for the victims and to leave behind the politics of silencing. But without changing the androcentric anthropological concept, this would only work in selected issues, not in general. Prevention against sexual abuse and violence needs explicit condemnation, which is only authentic if women in their own ranks are not discriminated against or held as minor compared to men – which leads to the assumption that the abuse of females is considered less serious than the abuse of males.

To stigmatize all actions which restrict women in their own sexual self-determination is the first *inevitable* step toward *gender-fair sexual ethics*. But to relieve the long history of restriction, condemnation and debasement, religions are questioned to change their ongoing paternalism concerning female sexuality. This surely does not mean voting for unlimited *laissez-fair-liberalism*, but for taking the different living-contexts of women seriously. Doubtlessly, it means to revise the comprehension of male-defined sexuality as a minefield, where women cannot help but failing. A gender-fair concept of sexuality has to give back women their sexual vitality, their potential to enjoy and to put away shame and fear of hurting scrupulous prescriptions. Perhaps churches are well advised to teach sexual ethics more on basis of the Song of Songs than on legal texts and on »everlasting eternal traditions«.²⁹

²⁷ See e.g. on the publications of PHYLLIS TRIBLE, *Texts of Terror. Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives*, Philadelphia 1984; ILSE MÜLLNER, *Gewalt im Hause Davids. Die Erzählungen von Tamar und Amnon (2 Sam 13,1–22)*, HBS 13, Freiburg i.Br. 1997; GERLINDE BAUMANN, *Love and Violence. The Imagery of Marriage for YHWH and Israel in the Prophetic Books*, Collegeville 2003; ANNE LETOURNEAU, *Campy Murder in Judges 4–5: Is Yael a *gebèrèt* (heroine)?*, in: IRMTRAUD FISCHER, in cooperation with DANIELA FEICHTINGER (eds.), *Gender Agenda Matters. Papers of the Feminist Section of the International Meetings of the Society of Biblical Literature*, Cambridge 2015, 42–86.

²⁸ The discussion concerning the scandal of pedophilia in the Roman Catholic Church focuses on sexual violence against males until now. The probably quantitatively much greater problem of sexual abuse of females in the church has not really come into ethical focus at this point in time.

²⁹ Although pope Francis has initiated a worldwide debate on sexuality in the context of the synod concerning the vocation and mission of the family (http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20141209_lineamenta-xiv-assembly_en.html, [Stand: 21.3.2015]), I am not very optimistic that this will have an impact on gender-fair sexual ethics.

ABSTRACT

Sexualität ist ein zentraler Bereich des menschlichen Lebens, den alle Kulturen durch Recht, Sitte und Brauch geregelt haben. Diese Regeln sind jedoch in den seltensten Fällen – und schon gar nicht in historischen Kulturen – individuell und selbstbestimmt festgelegt, sondern durch die jeweils Mächtigen. Frauen gehörten selten – und wenn, dann mit geringem Anteil – zu dieser Klasse. Auch die im AT sich ausdrückende patriarchale Gesellschaft bildet hier keine Ausnahme. Die entsprechenden Texte sind jedoch nicht als Abbild der Realität zu lesen, denn oft haben Rechtstexte oder Erzählungen in Bezug auf weibliche Sexualität nicht deskriptiven, sondern präskriptiven Charakter. Der Artikel geht vorerst auf Geschlechterkonzeptionen in den Schöpfungstexten ein und verortet Aussagen über Mutterschaft, sexuelle Lust von Frauen und Restriktionen weiblicher Geschlechtlichkeit in den sozialen Strukturen von Alt-Israel. Dabei wird auch auf die spezifische Vulnerabilität der Sexualität von Frauen und auf die Problematik sexualisierter Gewalt in metaphorischer Rede eingegangen und in Bezug auf die kirchliche Praxis heute für die Entwicklung einer genderfairen Sexualethik plädiert.