

## Historical Context

- Geographical Setting of Ancient Israel
  - Part of the Fertile Crescent, at least some possibility of growing crops on the land.
  - Palestine was only 90 miles wide, 160 miles long.
  - Due to the varied terrains, it became very difficult to plant and farm.
  - Increase of settlement into hill country, land described as uncleared forest. Climate had a rainy and dry season. If rains didn't come, then drought was a terrible threat.
  - Highly physical work to clear and farm the land.
  - Engaged in raising of flocks for milk, food, leather, skins for clothing.
  - Had to have a way to save water.
- People behind the stories were constantly at the threat of being annihilated.
  - Drought and famine could wipe out an entire group of people.
  - Disease
  - Military threat, war, attack.
  - Primary focus was survival of the next generation. Huge emphasis placed on fertility in order to produce the next generation.
- Everybody was important to survival of household.
  - Sexual divisions of labor based upon biological necessity.
  - Constant pregnancies along with nursing needs – women spent more time in the home.
  - Teaching the children, passing history and culture of the people.
  - Authority focus not the public sphere, it was domestic. Women who controlled the home had more authority than we might like to think.
- The life of women
  - Life expectancy was 30-35 years of age. Most women died in childbirth. Men didn't much longer either.
  - Patrilocal – wife moves from her family into husband's family. Mother's job to oversee the daughters-in-law.
  - Sons were desired because daughters weren't going to bring any labor into the home, ultimately going to leave and build up someone else's home.
  - Men took multiple wives: children didn't live sometimes over 2-3 yrs. Women weren't too anxious to have children, duty, population continue.
  - Household made up of extended family. Desired position was of oldest woman, or wife of first or second son. Worst place: unmarried daughter – wasn't bringing in extra labor.

- Women were property, servants were things used for a purpose. Women were always property of someone else. Went from being her father's property to her husband's property.
- Role of women in religion
  - Little influence in public worship, no priest or leadership role.
  - In private, women were leaders of household so they led worship at home. Taught the children the faith. Influenced a lot of religious practice of their family.
- Daily life of a woman:
  - Grind the grain
  - Get water
  - Cook the food
  - Tend the animals
  - Build the fire
  - Take care of children
  - Make the clothing
  - Take care of her husband
  - Take care of the servants and oversee the household
  - Make the pots and utensils
  - Prepare and keep a household budget
  - Store food to last through dry season
  - Pregnant and nursing