

# WOULD THE ACTUALLY 'POWERFUL' PLEASE STAND? The role of the queen (mother) in Daniel 5<sup>1</sup>

HJM van Deventer  
Potchefstroom University for CHE

---

## Abstract

*In the book of Daniel, like in much of the Old Testament, women do not take a prominent place. The female characters that appear in this book are - with one exception - not strong characters. Not one of the Jewish hero-figures is a woman. The first mention of women in the book (Daniel 5:2) is in the context of them being the possessions of a king. In Daniel 6:25 things become worse when the innocent wives of the men who brought in an accusation against Daniel are ordered to be killed along with their husbands. In Daniel 11:6 the only other woman in the book is manipulated in an arranged marriage between the inimical Ptolemaic and Seleucid empires. The 'welcome' exception to this rule concerning female characters is the queen in Daniel 5. This article investigates the role she plays in the narrative, but also asks whether she makes a positive contribution to the question of woman, power and the Bible.*

## 1. Introduction

During the last two decades Biblical criticism saw the rise and to a lesser degree the fall of a host of new methods for the reading of this ancient religious text, the Bible. The reasons for this development in our field of study are diverse and perhaps too complex to deal with by means of a few introductory remarks. However, most scholars might agree on the following as possible reasons for the diverse and stimulating new readings of the Bible which appear in recent volumes of theological journals, as well as in several monographs published since the beginning of the 1980s.

These reasons include<sup>2</sup>:

1. The demise of the historical critical method's influence on the study of the Bible, mainly due to this method not longer being viewed as the only 'valid' approach to the study of the Bible. Furthermore doubt has been cast on the positivistic basis underlying this approach.
2. Going hand in hand with the previous remark is the rise of the so-called literary approach to the interpretation of the biblical text. This approach also saw a development from so-called text orientated studies of the Bible which at first dominated the scene to studies focusing more on the role of the reader in the reading process<sup>3</sup>. This latest development takes seriously the different outlooks and presuppositions readers bring with them when reading a text. One of these so-called 'engaged' readings of a text is offered from a feminist or womanist perspective<sup>4</sup>.

---

1. A version of this article was read as a short paper at the annual conference of the Biblical Studies Society of Southern Africa held at UPE from 15-16 May 1998.  
2. Cf. also the brief overview by Clines (1990:9-12).  
3. Cf. Clines & Exum (1993) for a discussion and examples of the newer forms of Literary Criticism, especially concerning the Old Testament (Hebrew Bible).  
4. Cf. The Postmodern Bible (PMB) (1995:235, 237) for an indication of the difference between a womanist and a feminist perspective.

## 2. Feminist readings of the Bible - an overview<sup>5</sup>

The field of feminist study of the Bible, like any other form of Biblical interpretation, does not present us with a homogeneous or static point of departure<sup>6</sup>. A number of different outlooks are represented within this field. However, all of them are to some extent related to the study of the Bible from a feminine point of view.

The development of this form of criticism, especially since the mid-1970s also saw shifts in the 'feminine point of view' from which the Bible was studied. This development more or less echoes the development in Biblical interpretation in general from a historical towards a literary paradigm, as alluded to above. Earlier studies (cf. Brenner, 1985; Tribble, 1984:2) started out from the notion that biblical text to some degree mirrors reality (cf. *Postmodern Bible* [PMB], 1995:234). Therefore, Brenner (1985:9) states that her study entitled *The Israelite Woman - social role and literary type* concerns itself with 'women's position in the socio-political sphere', albeit, in most cases, reflecting 'the attitudes of male writers'. Her study is firmly fixed in a historical mould (cf. Brenner, 1985:14, 136).

At the other end of the spectrum we find examples of feminist studies not interested in a historical analysis of the role of women in an ancient Israelite society. These studies reflect a reader's concern to uncover ideological agendas behind these texts. In this regard the earlier work by Exum (1993) serves as a good example<sup>7</sup>. Before turning to a short discussion of this branch of interpretation, a link between the historical study by Brenner and the readerly study by Exum should be noted. Both state that we basically deal with men's texts in reading the Bible (Brenner, 1985:9; Exum, 1993:10). Therefore, Exum is not interested in asking questions about the possibility of women being responsible for some Biblical traditions. Her aim is to disrupt *ideological codes* in biblical narratives and to construct feminist (sub)versions of these texts<sup>8</sup> (Exum, 1993:11).

The method she employs for uncovering and critiquing the androcentric agenda of the Biblical narratives - according to which 'women are often made to speak and act against their own interests' (Exum, 1993:11) - is a method of reading these stories 'against the grain' (counter-reading). A further aim, which Exum (1993:14) then sets, is to 'uncover traces of woman's experience and woman's resistance to patriarchal constraints'<sup>9</sup>.

---

5. Cf. Bach (1993:195-206) for a comprehensive overview.

6. Cf. PMB (1995:236-254) for a brief discussion of a few feminist theories and feminist hermeneutics.

7. In her later work Exum (1996) ventures into 'the broader area of cultural criticism' (Exum, 1996:7) concerning herself with the 'cultural afterlives' of biblical women and the motivations lying behind the representations (interpretations) of those 'afterlives'.

8. One cannot but wonder to what extent this subversive aim reflects a patriarchal ideology, an ideology Exum ironically sets out to counter.

9. It is difficult to understand exactly how these traces are likely to be found in a text reflecting patriarchal interests. Especially in light of the fact that Exum (1993:12) claims *no exclusivity* for her readings of the women's stories in the text (cf. also Clines & Eskenazi's [1991] anthology of studies relating to the character of 'queen' Michal). Does this not mean that the story being told is merely the story of the interpreter and therefore perhaps not the story of *the text*? Especially when one comes to claiming aspects of 'woman's resistance' found in the text, care should be taken not to 'use' these female characters a second time - this time for the purposes of a modern day ideological agenda.

To be sure, I am not implicating Exum in this regard for I find her readings of biblical narratives both stimulating and provoking. However, I am concerned with 'gap-filling' which places a greater emphasis on promoting a present-day ideology than *interpreting the text* itself. It could be remarked that Exum (1993:27) in her treatment of the Michal 'narrative' views what is given in the text (the 'marital conflict' between David and Michal) as a metaphor (Exum uses 'symbol') for the political issue of the conflict between the houses of Saul and David. The idea of a metaphor being employed here remains open to questioning.

It is also remains a question whether the 'submerged strains' of women's voices uncovered in order to construct 'a version of their stories' in fact represent the voices of these *women in the text*. Do they not perhaps run the risk of presenting us only with the voice of a present day interpreter (cf. Sherwood (1995:125)? In this regard we may take seriously the view of Clines (1991:25-26) that on the one hand we do not have the stories of the 'minor' (female and male) characters in the biblical narrative and therefore these stories are mere 'artificial constructs' (cf. Clines, 1991:52). On the other hand Clines (1991:29) argues, to my mind convincingly, that if we were to interpret (explain) the 'story' of one of these necessary 'minor' (female or male) characters in the biblical narrative, that interpretation needs to have an anchor *in the text*. Thus, according to Clines (1991:29) the best we as interpreters can do is to understand 'the *characterisation* that the narrator has presented to us' (my emphasis) and not seek to reconstruct real thoughts or historical personages for these characters<sup>10</sup>.

This, however, cannot mean that we should not address the subversive ideologies there are to be found in these texts. It is quite true when Fewell & Gunn (1993:11) state that to leave the underlying [ideological] system unchallenged would if fact mean to subscribe to that ideology. The question surfacing here is how these ideologies should be addressed - by means of subversive readings from a different quarter (as Exum seems to do) or by merely pointing out these ideologies (as Fewell & Gunn<sup>11</sup> seem to do)?

Somewhere along this continuum running between historical and readerly studies the work of many other feminist scholars can be placed. In a combined study (a later) Brenner and Van Dijk-Hemmes (1993) introduced an alternative to studies in the historical mould. They re-routed the gender positions entrenched in the texts away from gendering authorship to that of gendering the text's authority. This route opened up a quest for identifying so-called female (F) voices within the text (cf. Brenner & Van Dijk-Hemmes, 1993:1-10). Van Dijk-Hemmes sets out to uncover traces of women's texts in the Hebrew Bible on basis of a method first proposed by Goitein (1957 [Eng. 1988]) (cf. Brenner & Van Dijk-Hemmes, 1993:9, 29-32). This entails the 'tracking down [of] biblical references to the literary traditions practised by women, and checking whether their remains have been preserved in the text' (Brenner & Van Dijk-Hemmes, 1993:90).

After this 'tracking down' and 'checking' of several biblical texts Van Dijk-Hemmes (1993:108-109) concludes that all the texts she discussed can be seen as women's texts 'in the sense that the voice of the primary speaker or narrator in them can be identified as a woman's voice, or could be interpreted (read) as such'. In the final analysis Van Dijk-Hemmes (1993:109) sees her programme as illuminating the creativity of women in ancient Israel and also focusing attention on what is called 'the voice-in-the-text'.

The final analysis made of Van Dijk-Hemmes' work indicates that this work lies a little closer to the historical side of our scale indicating different strands in feminist criticism. Contributions lying closer to the readerly edge are those by Tribble (1978, 1984)<sup>12</sup>, although

10. Clines (1991:61) maintains that 'when we speculate, about events or motives, we have stopped interpreting'.

11. However, in certain instances Fewell & Gunn go further than only pointing to patriarchal ideologies in the text. Cf. their reading of the 'stories' of Rebekah (Fewell & Gunn, 1993:71-76), Tamar (1993:87-89), Achsah (1993:122), Manoah's wife (1993:128-131) and Rizpah (1993:161). In their treatment of the text Fewell & Gunn at times also go further than the *text* would allow, stating, in fact, that they are speculating (Fewell & Gunn, 1993:143; cf. 1993:163; 1993:175-177).

12. Cf. Clines (1990:29-32) for a critique of Tribble and other 'second generation' feminists' suggestion to translate 'biblical faith without sexism' (Tribble [1973:31] as quoted by Clines [1990:27]). Clines (1990:47-

she is focusing more on the *text* itself than on readerly concerns<sup>13</sup>. In the first of these works Tribble (1978) explores, in the first part of the book, female imagery used for God in the Old Testament. The positive results of this enquiry lead Tribble, in the latter half of the book, to a re-reading of certain texts in the Old Testament (Genesis 2-3, Song of Songs, Ruth) in the light of equality between female and male as 'embodied' in God. (Cf. also Goldingay [1995:168] as regards the divine image represented by both male and female). In her later work Tribble (1984) leans a little more towards readerly concerns<sup>14</sup> (cf. Tribble, 1984:27, 55). However, at the same time she still focuses on the *text* itself when she re-tells the 'tales of terror' of Hagar, Tamar, an unnamed woman (in Judges 19), and the unnamed daughter of Jephthah, employing a (moderate) 'feminist hermeneutic'.

After this brief overview of certain aspects of feminist Biblical interpretation, I would like to turn my attention to a particular female character that can be identified in some Biblical texts.

### 3. The character of the queen mother

In the words of Clines (1991:35) we do not have access to the *person* of the queen (mother) mentioned in Daniel 5. We should therefore distinguish between the person of the queen (mother) and the character of the queen (mother). The biblical text can only present us with the last mentioned. In order to explain the role of this character, however, we would need to consider briefly the social role of a queen mother as perceived in the Israelite society.

In the text under discussion here we read only of 'the queen' (מלכותא) (Daniel 5:10). Modern commentators across the board agree that 'queen' here does not refer to the (a) wife of Belshazzar, but to the mother (or grand mother) of the monarch, put otherwise - the queen mother<sup>15</sup>. In this regard she echoes the (influential) character of the נבירה (sometimes translated as 'lady') mentioned in the Hebrew parts of the Old Testament (cf. 1 Kings 15:13; 2 Kings 10:13; Jeremiah 13:18; Jeremiah 29:2).

Andreasen (1983:180) hinted at the influence this character might have had by stating that the queen mother 'held a *significant official political position* superseded only by that of the king himself' (my emphasis). She is furthermore pictured as a female counsellor to the king along the lines of Lady Wisdom in Proverbs (Andreasen, 1983:188; cf. Andreasen, 1983:192-193) as well as providing 'a stabilizing, moderating influence in the political system' (Andreasen, 1983:194).

The influence of this character in the Israelite society is also underlined by Brenner

48) would have us rather move away from what, in a sense, created the problem for Tribble, namely the *authority* of the Bible. In stead of focussing on the *nature* of the Bible, Clines focuses on the *function* of this text 'to inspire people, bring out the best in them and suggest a vision they could never have dreamed of themselves' (Clines, 1990:48). Although sounding to me a little ambivalent, not to say contradictory, Clines suggests we think of the Bible 'as a resource for living which has no authority but which nevertheless manages to *impose itself powerfully* (sic!) upon people' (my emphasis). Brenner (1997:180-181) also approvingly cites this proposal.

13. Tribble (1978:8) describes her method of interpretation as rhetorical criticism and 'place[s] [it] under the general rubric of literary criticism'. The influence of her teacher James Muilenburg is not hard to detect (cf. Muilenburg, 1969; and also more resently Tribble, 1994).
14. In this second work Tribble also makes more mention of narratological aspects in the text (cf. the references to the storyteller / narrator in her reading of the story of Tamar [Tribble, 1984:38, 40, 42, 43 *et passim*]).
15. Cf. Driver (1900:64-65); Montgomery (1927:257-258); Aalders (1962:111); Porteous (1965:79); Baldwin (1978:122); Hartman & Dilella (1978:184); Lacocque (1979:97); Anderson (1984:57); Collins (1993:248).

(1985:17) when she says that 'a woman could not enjoy an institutional position of influence in court unless she was the queen mother'. Brenner (1985:32) mentions three possible circumstances in which a queen mother was given the title of *גבירה* in the Old Testament: (1) when a queen mother became regent after the death of her royal husband; (2) when a queen mother became regent after the death of her royal son(s); (3) when a queen mother became regent while the king-designated was still a minor. In the last instance the *גבירה* could retain her title, but lose her influence, in the event of the minor coming of age and taking over the reign. In the case of king Asa (1 Kings 15:13) we learn that, after taking over the reign, he had authority over the queen mother (Maacah) who acted as regent while he was still a minor (cf. Brenner, 1985:20)<sup>16</sup>.

In her study of the status and right of the *גבירה* Ben-Barak<sup>17</sup> (1994:170-171) takes a broader view of this term and applies it to queen mothers in general and not only to those queen mothers who acted as regents. After discussing the biblical sources scholars usually use to claim 'significant power' for the queen mother in the kingdom her son ruled over, Ben-Barak (1994:185) concludes that it was only in rare instances where it did occur that the queen mother held a position of power within the kingdom ruled by her son. In each of these instances (1) the king was a younger son and 'was not by right in line for the throne', and (2) the king is placed on the throne only after 'exertions of his mother on his behalf'. Other than these exceptions the queen mother had no official political status, nor any 'significant power'.

To summarise we may say that (1) the queen mother was perceived to stand under the authority of the king (her son) once he had established his rule; and (2) in the case of a queen mother being instrumental in the 'crowning' of her son who was not in line for the throne, the queen mother obtained a position of relative power in the kingdom of her son. After this exploration of the social context and role of the character of a queen mother and how she was depicted and perceived in Israelite society (a society the book of Daniel is addressed to), we can turn to the foreign queen mother in the book of Daniel.

#### 4. The queen mother in Daniel 5

Although it was stated that the queen mother in Daniel 5 represents no more than a character within the narrative and therefore 'we cannot know whether ... she is an accurate representation of a specific historical person' (Bar-Efrat, 1997:48), I would like to argue that for the reading of the narrative attempted here, the allusion to a historical figure may help to uncover an ideology behind this text (cf. Deist, 1996:17).

Nowadays it is all but a truism that the first six chapters in the book Daniel do not stem from the sixth century BCE and along with Collins (1993:37) it can be agreed that these chapters (especially chapters 2 - 6) are 'considerably later than the Babylonian period' and possibly stem from the third or fourth century BCE. Along the same lines it should be recognised that the book of Daniel contains many historical inaccuracies (cf. Collins, 1993:29-33). Among these is the generally accepted view that traditions about *Nabonidus*,

16. For a more detailed account of the position of Maacah at the royal court, cf. Spanier (1994). Spanier (1994:195) concludes that '[t]he power of the queen mother derived from her ancestry as well as from the territorial, commercial and diplomatic connections she represented'. When all of these conditions were met, as is the case with Maacah, we are, according to Spanier, indeed left with a very powerful woman in the Bible.

17. This study first appeared as an article in *JBL*, 110(1):23-34.



an usurper king laying claim to the throne by removing Nebuchadnessar's grandson Labashi-marduk, lies behind the story in Daniel 4 (cf. Collins, 1993:217-219). Regarding our story in Daniel 5 it is significant that this Nabonidus (and not Nebuchadnezzar) had a son called Belshazzar, who served as vice-regent during a period in which Nabonidus was absent from Babylon.

But why should this little historical detail, which by the way is not directly reflected in our text, concern us here? The reason is that Nabonidus' mother and thus the queen mother proper and grandmother of Belshazzar had a great influence during the reign of Nabonidus (cf. Weisberg, 1974:449)<sup>18</sup>. Furthermore it is clear from her inscription that she had no small part to play in putting her son on the throne in Babylon, while he was in no way in line for the throne. This is why Ben-Barak (1994:184) places this queen mother in the same category as the few queen mothers in Israel who in rare instances occupied a position of power at the court of her son. Our conclusion in this instance may be, therefore, that what the narrator is giving us here is not a description that is totally unfamiliar to the Israelite mind. This is even more so if we keep in mind a possible historical reference to the neo-Babylonian empire. What at first glance might seem to be an indication of a 'strong' character upsetting a patriarchal ideology, turns out to be a character in a not too unfamiliar social position of relative power - that of a strong queen mother.

Leaving a possible historical connection between the queen mother in Daniel 5 and Adad-Guppi at that, the focus is turned to the role of this character within the narrative.

Although the role of the queen in the narrative has been linked to that of Arioch in chapter 2 (cf. 2:[14-15], [24], 25) (Lacocque, 1979:97; Anderson, 1984:57; Fewell, 1991:88) care should always be taken not to '[relegate] characters to being mere functions in the plot' (Gunn & Fewell, 1993:48), as, indeed, Anderson (1984:57) seems to do. It would be worth the while, therefore, to compare the character of Arioch in Daniel 2 to that of the (unnamed!) queen mother in Daniel 5.

An initial reading already renders the following differences:

- Arioch is an insider 'going out' (יָצָא) to kill the sages, while the queen is an outsider 'going in' (בָּא) to the 'dampened' festivities.
- Arioch is named and given a title ('chief of the royal executioners'), the queen only has a title and no name - the only unnamed speaking character in this tale!
- Arioch is a man, the queen a woman.
- Arioch acts on orders (cf. 2:13-14; 24-25), while the queen acts independent of any orders.
- Arioch is for the most part addressed (2:14-15; 24), the queen speaks to (5:10-12).
- Arioch has a short speech mostly put in his mouth by Daniel (2:25), but the queen has a long speech, of which only the introduction is influenced by the previous narration.
- Arioch speech ends, despite his claim to fame ('I have found'), abruptly with the king addressing Daniel in the next verse, the queen's speech ends with an order (imperative) which is executed in the next verse (cf. Fewell, 1991:90).

On basis of this evidence it may be stated that the queen is, in fact, a more powerful character than Arioch. Her power is underlined when we consider her speech more closely.

---

18. Cf. the claims by Adda-guppi, the mother of Nabonidus, in the Harran inscriptions (Gadd, 1958:46-57). This influence seems to be directly related to her religious ideals for restoring the shrine and worship of the Moon-god (cf. Gadd, 1958:73, 90-91)

In her first sentence the queen seems to be following protocol, saying 'o king, live forever' (cf. 2:4). That this utterance is in fact meant to be ironic, is indicated by (1) the content of her speech itself, (2) the fact that Daniel, a minor subject, is not reported to make this utterance (5:17), and (3) in the context of the rest of the story this wish is frustrated in the last verse which reports the death of the king. Her following sentence echoes the earlier report by the narrator concerning the king's condition and serves to inform the reader that her perception of his condition is correct (Fewell, 1991:88, cf. Bar-Efrat, 1997:59).

The queen's next sentence echoes the exact words of king Nebuchadnezzar in the previous chapter (cf. 4:5 - MT). This introduces us to an aspect of the queen's speech that Fewell (1991:89) describes as *doing* more than it is *saying*. In this verse there are three references to Daniel (as yet unnamed) - two of these references echoes the words of king Nebuchadnezzar in chapter 4 vv. 5, 6. The fact that Daniel is perhaps not the primary referent here is stressed by the five direct references to Belshazzar's father, identified in the narrative as king Nebuchadnezzar. Fewell (1991:89) sees this speech of the queen as undermining the kingship of Belshazzar, identifying it even with the voice of the dead king Nebuchadnezzar.

In the second part of this speech (v. 12) she names Daniel as able to interpret the handwriting on the wall. However, the context in which this is done, and especially the words being used, echoes the undermining spirit in the first part (v. 11). Earlier in the narrative we learned that the joints (lit. knots) of the king's loins were loosened (v. 6) an euphemism for losing control over certain bodily functions related to the area of the loins (Wolters, 1991). In the second part of her speech the queen refers to the ability of Daniel to loosen knots, a wordplay on the loosening of the king's joints (knots). As Fewell (1991:89) wittingly asks: 'If the handwriting on the wall has "loosened the knots of the king's loins", what does the queen think Daniel's interpretation will do?' It is clear that the speech of the queen has a broader function than merely introducing Daniel to the narrative. In fact the narrator has her belittling an arrogant king.

In the context of this story it can be said that the queen mother is portraying the role of a female rebuker. In this story we find a drunk king, surrounded by female consorts, creating scene reminiscent of one the admonition of the mother of king Lemuel (Proverbs 31:1-9) is aimed against.

If this argument is correct, then it adds support to the earlier statement that the queen in Daniel 5 does not do much to upset a patriarchal scheme of thought. Van Dijk-Hemmes (1993:107-108) states that the motherly admonitions of Proverbs merely 'reproduce the dominant discourse'. She goes on to say that these texts indicate the extent to which women from the higher (in our case highest) strata of society were able to internalise the dominant (male) discourse<sup>19</sup>.

I would like to conclude by proposing an answer to a question, which has bearing on the notion of women, power and the Bible and which not co-incidentally echoes the question asked by Clines (1990).

## 5. What does the queen mother do to help?

What contribution does the queen mother make towards the reading of the Bible in an empowering and gender sensitive way? Is she a powerful woman in the Bible, and who benefits from her powerful character?

19. For a slightly different perspective see Brenner (1993:110-130).

If we start out from the earlier historical approach in feminist studies, we may end up by singing this queen mother's praises. In a powerful speech she reprimands her arrogant son by referring to the glorious days of his *father* (!). In this we find echoes of the few strong נבירה in the rest of the Old Testament. These women, who through personal ingenuity, obtained an important place at court, namely that of queen mother, because through their direct influence a son of theirs, who was not destined for the throne, became king.

However, if we move from a (constructed) historical world towards a narrative world questions arise about the real power of the queen mother and whether her power is not merely an instrument in another agenda, namely that of a male orientated author.

It is significant that the queen mother in Daniel 5 is not named. Her power is derived from her very high social standing, in fact the highest social standing a woman could obtain, albeit through personal ingenuity. As indicated the queen mother acts in the narrative world along the lines of the female rebuker. It is noteworthy that the narrator chooses the queen mother for this part. According to the societal set-up she was placed in a role from which rebuke is expected and, indeed, accepted. It is, after all, not one of 'his' concubines that rebukes the king. The queen mother's social standing explains her conduct in this court tale.

Should we conclude from this that women should first rise to the highest possible social standing, before their voices could be heard, even if they still sacrifice their names in the process? Should these women who in the words of Van-Dijk-Hemmes (1993:108) have internalised the dominating discourse be praised for their 'if-you-cannot-fight-them-join-them' attitude?

If we take even one step further (and perhaps run the risk of falling into a den of lions) should we not ask whether the narrator is not using the queen mother in Daniel 5? A narrator who merely stays within certain demarcated social lines to rebuke and even make fun of a king? A king who may be a wishful portrayal of the reigning monarch at the time of the completion of this book, namely the arrogant Antiochus Epiphanes (cf. Lacocque, 1979:92)?

Are we pushing too far by saying that the queen mother's high social standing is, in fact, deconstructed because, in spite of that high standing, she is still being used in the narrative world? Does she not only serve the interests of two parties - that of, ironically, the king as well as the narrator?

Although the queen mother is at first glance perceived as a 'powerful' character, her power is (mis)used in the narrative. In the first place she helps the king, in his world, to untie his knots (whatever ironic meaning that might have) and, secondly she helps the narrator, in his world, to belittle a king. In the end she perhaps only ends up being a helper [like Eve] (cf. Clines, 1990:25-48).

## 6. Concluding questions

'What, then, shall we say in response to this?' What relevance does this have for Biblical Studies in general and for the (gender) sensitive reader of the Bible in South Africa in particular? Perhaps this question can be answered by asking a few further questions: To what extent are gender sensitive readers striving towards becoming part of a dominant (male?) discourse, in order for their voices to be heard? Where should the blame for this be placed? Should it be placed on personal ambition (as is perhaps the case with the 'strong' queen mothers)? Or should it be placed on society (which is reluctant to lend an ear to something other than the dominant discourse), or perhaps on the text that forms the basis of our work as biblical scholars, and to a large extent also the basis for our society's perspective?



A suitable conclusion may be found by quoting an endnote in Fewell & Gunn (1993:194) which states: 'Most queen mothers are named [however, not the one in Daniel 5] but, in terms of the narrative, they effect nothing'. Unlike 'most queen mothers' more biblical scholars would hopefully work towards not merely to help, but in fact to *effect* the reshaping of the dominant discourse in Biblical Studies, and also the dominant discourse in society in general.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aalders, GC 1962. *Daniël*. Kampen: Kok.
- Anderson, RA 1984. *Daniel. Signs and Wonders* (ITC). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Andreasen, N-EA 1983. The Role of the Queen Mother in Israelite Society. *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 45:179-194.
- Bach, A 1993. Reading Allowed: Feminist Biblical Criticism Approaching the Millenium. *Currents in Research: Biblical Studies*, 1:191-215.
- Baldwin, JG 1978. *Daniel. An Introduction and Commentary* (Tyndale). Leicester: Inter-  
versity Press.
- Bar-Efrat, S 1997. *Narrative Art in the Bible<sup>2</sup>* (Hebr. orig. 1979). Sheffield: Sheffield  
Academic Press.
- Ben-Barak, Z 1994. *The Status and Right of the G<sup>e</sup>bîrâ*. (In Brenner, A ed. *A Feminist  
Companion to Samuel and Kings*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press. pp.  
170-185.)
- Bible and culture collective, the. 1995. *The Post-modern Bible*. New Haven: Yale.
- Brenner, A 1985. *The Israelite Woman: Social Role and Literary Type in Biblical  
Narrative*. Sheffield: JSOT Press.
- Brenner, A 1997. *The Intercourse of Knowledge. On Gendering Desire and 'Sexuality' in  
the Hebrew Bible*. Leiden: Brill
- Brenner, A & Van Dijk-Hemmes, F 1993. *On Gendering Texts. Female and Male Voices in  
the Hebrew Bible*. Leiden: Brill.
- Clines, DJA 1990. *What Does Eve Do to Help? and Other Readerly Questions to the Old  
Testament*. Sheffield: JSOT Press.
- Clines, DJA 1991. Michal Observed: an Introduction to Reading Her Story. (In Clines, DJA  
& Eskenazi, TC eds. *Telling Queen Michal's Story. An Experiment in Comparative  
Interpretation*. Sheffield: JSOT Press. pp. 24-63.)
- Clines, DJA & Eskenazi, TC 1991. *Telling Queen Michal's Story. An Experiment in  
Comparative Interpretation*. Sheffield: JSOT Press.
- Collins, JJ 1993. *Daniel. A Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Hermeneia). Minneapolis:  
Fortress.
- Deist, F 1996. Kanttekeninge by representasie in ou Hebreuse literatuur. *Tydskrif vir  
Letterkunde*, 34(4):10-18.
- Driver, SR 1900. *The Book of Daniel*. Cambridge: University Press.
- Exum, JC 1993. *Fragmented Women. Feminist (Sub)versions of Biblical Narratives*.  
Sheffield: JSOT Press.
- Exum, JC 1996. *Plotted, Shot, and Painted. Cultural Representations of Biblical Women*.  
Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.
- Exum, JC & Clines, DJA 1993. *New Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible*. Sheffield:  
JSOT Press.
- Fewell, DN 1991. *Circle of Sovereignty. Plotting Politics in the Book of Daniel*. Nashville:  
Abingdon Press.
- Fewell, DN & Gunn, DM. 1993. *Gender, Power, and Promise. The Subject of the Bible's  
First Story*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

- Gadd, CJ 1958. The Harran Inscriptions of Nabonidus. *Anatolian Studies*, 8:35-92.
- Goldingay, J 1995. Hosea 1-3, Genesis 1-4 and Masculist Interpretation. (In Brenner, A ed. A Feminist Companion to Samuel and Kings. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press. pp. 161-168.)
- Gunn, DM & Fewell, DN 1993. *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hartman, LF & Dilella, AA 1978. *The Book of Daniel* (AB). Garden City: Doubleday.
- Lacocque, A 1979. *The Book of Daniel*. (Translated by D Pellauer.) Atlanta: John Knox Press.
- Montgomery, JA 1927. *The Book of Daniel* (ICC). Edinburgh: T&T Clark.
- Muilenburg, J 1969. Form Criticism and Beyond. *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 88:1-18.
- Porteous, NW. 1965. *Daniel. A Commentary* (OTL). Philadelphia: Westminster Press.
- Postmodern Bible see  
Bible and Culture Collective
- Sherwood, Y 1995. Boxing Gomer: Controlling the Deviant Woman in Hosea 1-3. (In Brenner, A ed. A Feminist Companion to the Latter Prophets. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press. pp. 101-125.)
- Spanier, K 1994. The Queen Mother in the Judean Royal Court: Maacah - a Case Study. (In Brenner, A ed. A Feminist Companion to Samuel and Kings. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press. pp. 186-195.)
- Trible, P 1978. *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*. Philadelphia: Fortress.
- Trible, P 1984. *Texts of Terror. Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives*. Philadelphia: Fortress.
- Trible, P 1994. *Rhetorical Criticism. Context, Method, and the Book of Jonah*. Philadelphia: Fortress.
- Van Dijk-Hemmes, F 1993  
see  
Brenner, A & Van Dijk-Hemmes, F 1993.
- Weisberg, DB 1974. Royal Women of the Neo-Babylonian Period. (In Garelli, P. ed. Le Palais et La Royauté (Archéologie et Civilisation). Paris: Geuther. pp. 447-454.)
- Wolters, A 1991. Untying the King's Knots: Physiology and Wordplay in Daniel 5. *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 110:91-97.