

**A KARANGA PERSPECTIVE
ON FERTILITY AND BARRENNESS
AS BLESSING AND CURSE IN 1 SAMUEL 1:1-2:10**



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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

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Summary:

This dissertation seeks to develop further the theological interpretation of the books of Samuel, by examining I Samuel 1:1-2:10 in the context of fertility and barrenness as blessing and curse. This reading was related to the Karanga understanding of fertility and barrenness. The contribution shows how the Biblical narrative can become a resource for ethical reflection in African communities such as the Karanga women.

The hypotheses that guided this study, were that:

- a-Fertility and barrenness in the Old Testament should be understood in close conjunction with blessing and cursing as theological concepts in ancient Israel.
- b- Fertility and barrenness could also be examined in a relevant and contextual manner by relating it to the culture and understanding of the Karanga people.

In order to achieve this, two major tasks were attempted. One: An exegesis of 1 Samuel 1:1-2:10 in which Vernon Robbins' method of Socio- Rhetorical criticism was used. The method helped to identify that the text is a narrative, and that the author might have been the Deuteronomistic historian, who wrote in the period of the decline of the Judean monarchy and when the Jews were in exile. The narrative is used to tell about the despair of the Jews, and to inform the Jews that there was hope for restoration if they obeyed God. This ideology is woven in the story of a barren woman Hannah who suffered the despair of barrenness and was later blessed with a child because of her prayer and obedience to God. In the narrative God is described as one who cares for the marginalised, and one who changes the lives of his people, from curse to blessing. The method also helped to realise the culture and context of Hannah, and made it possible to relate this culture and context to other cultures that are similar.

Secondly an empirical survey was conducted amongst one hundred Karanga women. The findings were that Karanga consider fertility as blessing and barrenness as curse.

The curse is experienced in the suffering of the barren women. Barrenness is used to inflict pain, to marginalise women, and has become a major cause of divorce and death through the spread of HIV and Aids. A reading of the story of Hannah helped the Karanga women to

identify their barren problems with Hannah, and to find a new way of understanding their own problem in terms of hope.

This study was able to prove its hypothesis both through the exegesis and the discussions of the research findings. It was found that the narrative form of the text appealed effectively to the understanding of Karanga women. This was possible because narrative is one of the methods of communication that is used effectively by the Karanga in their language. Through using Hannah as a paradigm of curse and blessing in relation to barrenness and fertility, Karanga women were challenged to view their barren situations in a different way that is open to accept change from curse to blessing. The study has also contributed to see how an old text of the time of Hannah could in the present day contextually influence Karanga women's barren experiences through holding the same culture and also by having similar experiences barren of women.

Opsomming:

Hierdie dissertasie poog om die teologiese interpretasie van die boeke van Samuel verder te ontwikkel by wyse van 'n ondersoek van I Samuel 1:1-2:10 in die konteks van vrugbaarheid en onvrugbaarheid as 'n seën en as 'n vervloeking. Hierdie ondersoek verwys na die Karanga-bevolking se begrip van vrugbaarheid en onvrugbaarheid. Die bydrae toon aan hoe die Bybelse verhaal 'n bron vir etiese nadenke onder Afrika-gemeenskappe, soos die Karanga-vroue, kan word.

Die hipotetieses wat hierdie studie gerig het, was dat:

- a- Vrugbaarheid en onvrugbaarheid in die Ou Testament behoort begryp te word in 'n noue verbintenis met seën en vervloeking as teologiese begrippe in antieke Israel.
- b- Vrugbaarheid en onvrugbaarheid kan ook ondersoek word in 'n relevante en kontekstuele wyse deur dit te verbind met die kultuur en begrip van die Karanga-mense.

Om dit te vermag, is twee hooftake onderneem. Die eerste was 'n eksegetiese van I Samuel 1:1-2:10 waarin Vernon Robbins se metode van sosio-retoriese kritiek aangewend is. Hierdie metode het gehelp om die teks as 'n narratief te identifiseer en dat die skrywer die Deuteronomiese historikus kon gewees het, wat in die periode van die monargie van Juda geskryf het en ook tydens die Jode se ballingskap. Die narratief word gebruik om aan te toon hoe wanhopig die Jode was en om hulle in te lig dat daar hoop op hul herstel was indien hulle God gehoorsaam. Hierdie ideologie is verweef in die verhaal van die onvrugbare vrou, Hanna, wat aan die wanhoop van onvrugbaarheid gely het en later met 'n kind geseën is op grond van haar gebede en gehoorsaamheid aan God. In die narratief word God as die een beskryf wat na die gemarginaliseerdes omsien en wat die lewens van sy mense vanaf vervloeking tot seën omvorm. Die metode het ook meegehelp om die kultuur en konteks van Hanna te begryp en dit moontlik gemaak om hierdie kultuur en konteks te verklaar ingevolge dié van ander soortgelyke kulture.

Tweedens is 'n empiriese studie onder 'n honderd Karanga-vroue onderneem. Die bevindinge was dat Karanga-vroue vrugbaarheid as 'n seën en onvrugbaarheid as 'n vervloeking beskou.

Die vervloeking word in die lyding van die onvrugbare vrou ervaar. Onvrugbaarheid word aangewend om pyn en lyding te veroorsaak, om vroue te marginaliseer en het 'n belangrike

bron van egskeiding en dood deur die verspreiding van HIV en Vigs geword. Deur die verhaal van Hanna te lees, het die Karanga-vroue gehelp om hul eie onvrugbaarheidsprobleme met dié van Hanna te identifiseer en om nuwe wyses te vind om hul eie probleme te verstaan in terme van hoop.

Hierdie studie was in staat om sy hipoteses te bewys sowel by wyse van die eksegeese en ook deur die bespreking van die navorsingsbevindings.. Dit is bevind dat die narratiewe vorm van die teks duidelik tot die begrip van die Karanga-vroue gespreek het. Dit was moontlik aangesien 'n verhalende trant een van die kommunikasiewyses is wat doeltreffend deur Karanga-vroue aangewend word in hul taal. Deur Hanna as 'n paradigma van vervloeking en as seën te gebruik met verwysing tot onvrugbaarheid en vrugbaarheid, is Karanga-vroue uitgedaag om hul beskouing van hul onvrugbare toestand op verskillende wyses te betrag wat oop is om 'n verandering te aanvaar vanaf vervloeking tot seën. Die studie het ook daartoe bygedra om te sien hoe 'n ou teks uit die tyd van Hanna tans kontekstueel die Karanga-vroue se onvrugbaarheidservarings kan beïnvloed waar hulle uit 'n soortgelyke kultuur kom en ook soortgelyke ervarings as Hanna het as onvrugbare vroue.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

There are questions and concerns about fertility and barrenness as blessing and curse that emerge from the Zimbabwean Karanga culture and tradition. These unaddressed concerns prompted the researcher of this dissertation to conduct research to find a way of reading the Biblical Hannah narratives in the light of blessing and curse, and then to appropriate it to the Karanga cultural way of understanding fertility and barrenness. This is done taking into consideration the Karanga culture and tradition that hold that barrenness is blamed on women. For a woman to have dignity in the Karanga society, she has to be able to bear children. What is called “wife” (*mukadzi*) among the Karanga people is in fact the uterus. In this culture, the purpose for marrying seems to be that of having children, which makes the family or clan grow.

This also has some bearing on the problem of menopause. Women who reach menopause have to arrange that their parents provide another wife who is young enough to continue giving birth for their husbands. This is the same case with women who get married and cannot conceive and consequently the family of the woman has to provide another wife. Whether or not this second woman loves the man is of no consequence. As a result of this kind of culture young men and women are tempted to test their fertility before marriage. Often the result is that of unwanted pregnancies, baby dumping, an increased number of single young parents, baby theft, divorce, increased number of female deaths as a result of backyard abortions, and the spread of HIV and Aids.

Among the Karanga barren women are regarded as those “who eat their own eggs”. In some cases these women are viewed as having bad spirits of their grandmothers, which cast a spell over them so that they do not have successful marriages. It is, therefore, held that such women need cleansing. In most cases if a woman cannot conceive the first response is to send her back to her parents so that they can cleanse her of the evil spirit or demon in her. In this cleansing ritual the ancestral spirits of the family are asked to bless the womb of the woman.

1.1 Statement of Problem

The Karanga understanding of fertility and barrenness results in the problem of an increased number of female deaths through stress, suicide, HIV/Aids and other uterus-related diseases. The following questions arising from this situation prompted the researcher to develop a keen interest in researching this problem and wished to take seriously the questions raised by barren women.

- How does the Old Testament regard fertility and barrenness in relation to God?
- How do the Karanga people of Zimbabwe understand barrenness and fertility in their own culture, and how does this cultural understanding influence their interpretation of the Hannah narratives (1 Samuel 1:1 – 2:10)?

1.2 Hypothesis

- (a) Fertility and barrenness in the Old Testament should be understood in close conjunction with blessing and cursing as theological concepts in ancient Israelite culture.
- (b) Fertility and barrenness could also be explained in a relevant and contextual manner by relating it to the culture and understanding of the Karanga people of Southern Zimbabwe.
- (c) It is presupposed that a socio-rhetorical exegesis of the Hannah narrative (1 Samuel 1: 1 – 2:10) would assist the Karanga women to gain more theological insight in their understanding of barrenness and fertility.

1.3 Methodology

This dissertation will commence by undertaking Social-rhetorical exegesis of the text according to the methodology of Vernon Robbins. This method examines five different textures of the text and enables a comprehensive study with contextual relevance.

The following is a brief explanation of the methodology of Vernon Robbins. It focuses on values, convictions and beliefs in the texts and in the world in which we live. In my

discussion of the methodology of Robbins I will indicate how three other Biblical scholars (R A Culpepper, R Doran and P K Gladden) have reviewed the socio-rhetorical approach.

1.3.1 Meaning of the Concept "socio-rhetorical"

"Rhetorical" refers to the way in which language in a text is a means of communication among people. Rhetorical analysis of a text examines the subjects and topics used in a text to present thought, speech, stories and arguments. People use language to communicate in life. Socio-rhetorical criticism integrates the way people use language and the way they live in the world (Robbins 1996:1).

Socio-rhetorical criticism assumes that the text is a textured tapestry that has patterns and images (Robbins 1996:2). In order to achieve its goal, this method uses five different textures to examine a text. These are inner texture; intertexture, social and cultural texture, ideological texture and sacred texture. I share the view that this method seems to be very exhaustive, but also too long for those who would like to perform quick exegesis of a text for use in a sermon (Gladden 1998:318). In the same vein Gladden is also of the opinion that Robbins makes too many assumptions that all readers of the relevant texts are acquainted with other older methodologies that preceded his. The method of Robbins is open to use in the sense that he invites people to start with anyone of his textures. Robbins (1996:1-2) also acknowledges that in certain instances, not all textures may apply to one text. However, he encourages the use of two or more textures on one given text.

The following is a brief explanation of each of the five textures.

1.3.2 Inner Texture

The inner texture concerns a repetition of words, creation of beginnings and endings, alternation of speech and storytelling and particular ways in which the words present arguments (Robbins 1996:3). It is the texture of the medium of communication (Robbins 1996:7). Inner texture is the analysis of words themselves before one looks at the "meanings" of words. It is an exercise that is done prior to the interpretation of words. This is done in order to achieve some knowledge of words and word patterns. Robbins suggests six kinds of

intertextual analysis in a text. These are repetitive, progressive, narrational, opening-middle-closing, argumentative and sensory-aesthetic textures.

1.3.2.1 The Repetitive Texture and Pattern

This analyses the repetition of words, phrases, major characters, and major topics in a given text. Sometimes this repetition is found in pronouns like "I", "you" and "we". An example of this will be shown when this method is applied in the text of this dissertation.

1.3.2.2 Progressive Texture and Pattern

This texture examines the sequences of words and phrases. Progression is reflected in the movement of one step to another in a given text. It helps to see phenomena that work as a stepping stone to other phenomena, or how sub-units are connected to each other in a given text. Progression may be called the development of one unit to another in order to form one coherent unit.

This could be in the form of the movement of one word to another or one scene to another. Sometimes there is a sequence of steps like "I, I"; "they, they" in a given text (Robbins 1996:9). A more detailed example of this will be given later.

1.3.2.3 Opening – middle – closing Texture and Pattern

This examines the opening, body and conclusion of a section. In this case the interpreter of a text should be able to identify the opening, body and conclusion of a phenomenon. Robbins states that in most cases repetition, progression and narration work together to bring about the opening, body and conclusion of a section (Robbins 1996:19).

1.3.2.4 Argumentative Texture and Pattern

This study examines the inner reasoning in a text. Sometimes facts or points are presented in a text with reasons to support them or sometimes the points are argued for using opposites. These argumentative textures are used in a persuasive manner to make the reader accept what is portrayed in the text. Words like "because" are used in the argumentative texture to give reasons for the occurrence of events.

1.3.2.5 Sensory-aesthetic Texture and Pattern

This texture examines the senses that the text evokes, e.g. emotion, sight, touch or sound. In order to study this texture, one has to examine the form or genre of a text. Finding the form helps to identify the sensory-aesthetic texture and pattern. Robbins provides an example that a letter and a historic account have different sensory-aesthetic textures (1996:31). This means that they carry in them different emotions or they make the reader feel differently.

1.3.3 Intertexture

The intertexture of a text is the interaction of the language in the text with "outside" material and physical "objects," historical events, texts, customs, values, roles, institutions and systems. Intertexture examines the configuration and reconfiguration in a text. In certain instances a text imitates another, but places different people in it. Sometimes it repeats a tradition that is well-known so that it carries a different meaning (Robbins 1996:40).

Intertexture looks at the oral-scribal, cultural, social and historical intertextures. Oral-scribal intertexture examines the way language in a text uses the language of another text, either by way of replication, omission or recitation. In other words, it examines the way a text uses another existing text. Cultural intertexture examines the culture within which the text interacts. Social intertexture examines the social practices of people in the text, taking into consideration social role, social institution, social code and social relationship. The historical intertexture is concerned with events that take place at specific places and times. It also relates to factors that include socio-economic and political issues.

In his review of this method, Culpepper says that the relationship of the inner and the inter textures is not clear (1998:74), while Doran is of the opinion that these two textures are different, in the sense that the inner texture is concerned with words and word patterns before interpretation, while intertexture helps us to understand more about similar texts like the Gospels (1998: 585). In my view, I also find that these two textures are different. For example: Intertexture helps the reader of a text to interpret and understand doublets that are found in the biblical texts by understanding the literary and theological aspects that tie them together, while inner texture is concerned with examining the words in a text, a process that is done at the beginning of interpretation.

1.3.3.1 Oral – Scribal Intertexture

This is discovered through examining the recitation, recontextualisation, reconfiguration, narrative amplification and thematic elaboration.

Recitation

This is the transmission of speech or narrative from either an oral or written context and in the exact or different words in which the person received it (Robbins 1996:41). Recitation occurs in the form of:

- Replication of exact words;
- Replication of exact words with slight difference;
- Omission of certain words to make the sentence brief and end up looking like a proverb;
- Recitation of a saying using words different from the authoritative source;
- Recitation that uses some of the narrative words in the biblical text plus a saying from the text;
- Recitation of a narrative in substantially one's own words; and
- Recitation that summarises a collection of text that includes various episodes (Robbins 1996:41-43).

Robbins gives examples of these recitations and he quotes his examples from the New Testament. Robbins also quotes Hock and O'Neil (1986:95) who have suggested "that writers

learn how to recite not only in the same words but in other words too" (Robbins 1996:42). This is an assumption that in every writing some recitation takes place.

Recontextualisation

This involves presentation of words in a text without showing that the words have been used anywhere else in the biblical texts. Recontextualisation may be found in attributed speech and in narratives. Also in recontextualisation the structure and topics for the scene can be different (Robbins 1996:48).

Reconfiguration

Robbins (1996:50) says this is a way of telling an old story in a new way, making the previous event foreshadowed by a later event. This reconfiguration is found mostly when examining the cultural intertexture. A further explanation of this will follow henceforth (Robbins 1996:50).

Narrative amplification

This is an extended composition that contains recitation, recontextualisation and reconfiguration. This may be done by means of recitation and recontextualisation of a particular culture, tradition or belief. The same words could be used directly or indirectly. Words could be used to express a tradition or a belief and be attributed to an individual as if they are his or her own words. The belief system of a community may be expressed in a speech or words that are said to have originated from one person.

Thematic elaboration

This is an alternative to narrative amplification. It occurs in cases where a theme or thesis is found in the beginning of a story and its meaning is found in the progression of the argument of that story as it progresses. An elaboration involves the textual, social and cultural traditions of the text, which makes the argument complete. An elaboration that makes a complete argument involves the proposition, the reason, and the proof of the reason, the

embellishment, and the résumé. Elaboration then is a mode of argumentation that can be used to defend faith statements within the intertextual context (Robbins 1996:58).

1.3.3.2 Cultural intertexture

The assumption of intertexture is that texts have an interaction with cultures of various kinds. Robbins (1996:68) says "cultural knowledge is 'insider' knowledge". This kind of knowledge is only shared by people who belong to the culture or by those who are involved in it through participation, or by way of education. The study of the Karanga culture on fertility and barrenness in this dissertation will benefit from the fact that the researcher is also a Karanga. So I will use my personal knowledge of the Karanga culture. The fact that I am a married woman within the culture will help me to speak about some of the things from my own experience, as an "insider".

Robbins (1996:58-60) also says that cultural intertexture appears in words and configurations, such as values, codes, scripts or systems (purity, law covenant). This intertexture is found in a text through reference or allusion and echo. Reference is a word that points to a person or tradition that is known to people. Echo is a word or phrase that evokes a concept from cultural tradition. There could be multiple cultural dimensions in one text. Robbins (1996:62) says there is a possibility that scholars may differ on the cultural dimension of a text.

The following study will examine the culture of Hannah, as it is given in the text, and see how this culture can speak to the Karanga culture, and influence it in an illuminating way. Knowing the culture of a people also helps to know how these people can be influenced to see things differently for a change.

1.3.3.3 Social intertexture

Intertexture also examines the social dimension of a text. This is achieved through observing the behaviour and public material objects produced by other people in their communities. Social knowledge is a common phenomenon that is held by all persons. This knowledge falls into four groups. There is the social role, social institution, social code and the social relationship. Most biblical texts, especially narratives, reflect this social intertexture of the characters involved. The phenomenon of social knowledge provides data from outside the

text. Such information helps to gain more information on the social meaning of the text, while the social phenomena give information that sheds more light on the interpretation of the text.

1.3.3.4 Historical intertexture

This intertexture is concerned with events that occurred at a specific time in a specific location (Robbins 1996:63). In order to be able to interpret a historical event, one needs to know also the social, cultural and the ideological phenomena contained within the event. The historical intertexture examines the historicity of a text by looking at the social, cultural phenomena of the text. It examines and questions the occurrences of events in terms of time, people, place and institutions that are outside the text. This historical information from outside the text will help to give the text its historical intertexture.

It seems that intertexture will be of great use in my study of the Hannah narratives in the sense that it will help me to analyse and be able to read Hannah in the context of other barren women of the Old Testament and also to read about her in the light of the women who are immediate to her context.

1.3.4. Social and Cultural Texture

The social and cultural texture of a text is discovered through examining specific social topics, common social, cultural topics and cultural categories. The aim of this texture is to discover the social issues and cultural norms that drive the actions of the characters in the given text.

Specific social topics reveal the people's religious responses to the world in its discourse. The following questions are asked: "Do the narrator and characters in the story assert or imply that the world is evil, and if so, how evil is it? Do they indicate how the world could be changed? If the world cannot be changed, do they indicate how it is possible to live in it, without participating in evil?" (Robbins 1996:71). Answers to these questions are found in specific topics for discussion.

Examples of such topics are:

- *Conversionist*, which is characterised by a view that the world is corrupt because people are corrupt.
- *Revolutionist*: This declares that the destruction of the world, especially the social order, will serve people.
- *Introversionist*: This holds that the world is evil and irredeemable. Salvation can be achieved only by getting out of it.
- *Gnostic-manipulationist*: This seeks a transformed method of coping with evil.
- *Thaumaturgical*: This is concerned with the individual's concern for relief from ills.
- *Reformist*: These views hold that the world is corrupt because of its corrupt social structures. If these structures can be changed, then people may receive salvation.
- *Utopian*: Seeks to amend social structures through divine given structures in contrast to the way of the reformist.

1.3.4.1 Common social and cultural topics

This is an examination of the overall context of the text. This is achieved by looking at topics like honour, guilt, and rights cultures. Honour is generally a male-dominant component, while shame is attributed to the female. This is an understanding of the order of general life systems. Other topics are concerned with dyadic relationships and legal contracts and agreements. These are contracts of relationships into which people enter. There is also the topic of challenge-response. This is in the form of a tug of war. This challenge is issued as a claim to enter the social space of another and could be negative or positive.

1.3.4.2 Final cultural categories

These are the topics that help to identify the cultural location of a person. Cultural location is different from social location. Cultural location is concerned with how people present themselves to others in terms of their propositions, reason and arguments. People are usually separated by dominant culture, subculture, counterculture, contra culture and liminal culture (Robbins1996:86).

It is necessary at this point to clarify that social intertexture and social and cultural texture are different in the sense that the former is concerned with the social or sociological elements and the latter is concerned with the problem of evil and the cultural topics that separate people.

1.3.5 Ideological Texture

In this texture Robbins (1996:95) makes an assumption that all interpreters bring some pre-suppositions to a text. As a result ideological texture-analysis focuses on people, the writers and readers of a text. This texture examines the biases, opinions and stereotypes of a writer and a reader. Ideological texture begins by looking at the writer, then secondly the reader, thirdly the interpretations of other interpreters of the same text and finally the text itself. This ideological analysis moves from the perceptions of an individual into the perceptions or beliefs of a group of people of the same time in history.

The primary subjects of ideological analysis are people. Ideological texture concerns the biases, opinions, preferences and stereotypes of a particular writer and reader (Robbins 1996:95). When a person searches for the ideological aspects of a text, he or she seeks to find both the interests of the author and how those interests are argued. Ideological criticism thus is closely tied to an investigation of the social location of the author and how that author is situated vis-à-vis the audience and the culture (Robbins 1996:118). Ideological analysis is almost like intertextual analysis in the sense that it looks at the text of focus and then relates it to other texts. In so doing the texture will look at the biases of the people in the text, both the writer and the reader, and seek to see how these biases have been treated.

1.3.6 Sacred Texture

This texture is applied in order to discover the divine in a text. The first step is that one has to describe the nature of God in a text, e.g. whether God is Father or Creator, etc., in a given text. This is usually discovered in the attributes of God in a text. Sacred texture examines phrases such as Holy Person and Spirit Being (Robbins 1996:130). These phrases also point at some greater powers that compete with God. Also, divine history is examined in order to discover the power of God in the text. Issues of human redemption, ethics, human commitment and religious community are examined in a text. All this is done in order to

enable the detection of the relationship of God and human beings in a text. In this process the theological meaning of a text may be discovered. Questions like: "Where is God?" "Who is God?" "How do people in the text relate to God?" are raised. These questions work as tools to achieve the sacred texture of a text (1996:130-133) The following categories are designed to guide the reader in a search to find the sacred texture or sacred aspects of a text regardless of whether the text is sacred or not.

1.3.6.1 Deity

God or a divine being may exist in a text directly or in the background of it. Sometimes there are references to God, or in other instances God communicates in a speech. Sometimes divine nature is encountered in revelation or there is more indirect reference to a God or gods in a text (Robbins 1996:120).

The first step of analysing a sacred texture is to describe the nature of God, through his actions and revelation.

1.3.6.2 Holy Person

A text may feature one or more people who have a special relation to God or to divine powers. This person is usually associated with holy things, places or ways, for example priests, prophets and judges in the Old Testament (Robbins 1996:121).

1.3.6.3 Spirit Being

Spirit Beings can be divine or evil beings who have the nature of a spirit rather than fully human (Robbins 1996:123). An example of this are the angels. In some cases texts will feature spirit beings. These have the nature of spirit and not the form of a human being. The sacred texture of a text is often found in the conflict of the powers of evil and the power of good.

1.3.6.4 Divine history

It is an assumption of sacred texts that divine power directs events towards a certain end in history (1996:123). For example seers and prophets in the Old Testament make apocalyptic, revelatory sayings that foretell the end-time. Another example is how God is woven into the history of Israel as they move towards end-times, commonly called "the day of the Lord."

1.3.6.5 Human redemption

This is another dimension of sacred texture. It examines the giving of benefit from the divine to humans as a result of events, rituals or practices. Divine powers transform human lives to a higher level of existence, sometimes after an event or a ritual performance. Redemption may also result in the change from mortality to immortality. This is achieved after death (Robbins 1996:125-126).

Another form of redemption is when one is liberated from the burden of impurity or guilt (Robbins 1996:126). In this form of redemption, one is taken out of the powers that are destructive and preventive of progress in one's life.

1.3.6.6 Human commitment

Sacred texture includes a portrayal of humans who are faithful followers, and supporters of people who play a role in revealing the ways of God to humans, (Robbins 1996:126). This is found in the way people respond to a religion through their practices of their beliefs.

1.3.6.7 Religious Community

Sacred texture considers the aspect of the formation and nurturing of a religious community, (Robbins 1996:127). Human commitment is often supported by the way an individual participates with other people in matters that fulfil commitment to divine ways. This texture seeks to find the people's commitment to God, to people inside the community and to people outside. In the Israelite community this concerned the matters of Israel as children of God. The feasts that were celebrated together as a community at the temple in Jerusalem are a good example of this.

1.3.6.8 Ethics

Ethics concerns the responsibility of humans to think and act in a special way, in any given circumstance (Robbins 1996:129). Religious ethics refers to the way humans think and act in a way that is motivated by commitment to God. Religious ethics are expected to be good personal behavioural conduct of a religious person. Some characters in a text exhibit good ethics, some exhibit bad ethics. What makes ethics good or bad are the religious moral expectations of religion. Sacred texture examines the ethics of the characters in a text to see whether the people were religious or not.

Eventually all the three reviewers of the work by Robbins agree that this is a weak discussion of the Sacred texture. The study of Deity, Holy Person, Spirit Being, and Sacred places is viewed by Doran as “a list of divine characters” which does not study more than the involvement of these characters to human life (1998:585).

I find it difficult to come to grips with the term “religious”, because this is a universal relevant term. It is a term for use by all religions. Secondly I find it difficult to judge the religiosity of people by using ethics, because ethics is not a religion, but a part of the religion. I suggest a change of the heading from sacred texture to theological texture. Sacred is directly related to sacredness and sacred beings, while theological texture appeals to a broader study of God’s involvement in the text and in human life.

1.3.7 Empirical Study

Empirical research was used as a tool to collect data from Karanga women. This was conducted by using a designed questionnaire. Since the matter was treated confidentially, it was helpful to meet the people individually in order to create a favourable situation for the people to be able to open up and confide in me. My pastoral experience proved to be an advantage in my research.

A sample of 100 respondents was considered enough since I am more concerned about a qualitative than a quantitative investigation. The respondents were chosen randomly, and the biographical section of the questionnaire guided me to ensure that all the ages and social

contexts have been represented. The area of research was Masvingo, because this is where we find the highest concentration of the Karanga people. The research interviews were conducted with women only. The reason is that it has been proved that the problem of fertility and barrenness seems to be a matter that affects women most, both in the Bible and in the Karanga context.

Stage I

A pilot project of 20 people was initially conducted. This was done in order to test the questionnaire. Those who could not read and write were assisted. A report on this stage was compiled. Before compiling the data, a translation from Karanga to English was also done. Since the researcher was satisfied with the quality of the responses that she obtained, the second set of fully fledged interviews were subsequently conducted as stage two.

Stage II

The envisaged number of respondents was 100 people.

The same questionnaire was used to interview women, since the pilot questionnaire in stage 1 has proven to be adequate. The respondents were selected by means of random sampling, and those who wished to take the questionnaire and complete it alone were allowed to do so. Respondents who could not read or write were assisted to complete the questionnaire.

Stage III

The questionnaires were collected from the respondents and the answers to the questions were coded and systematised for analysis. The report was compiled thematically.

Stage IV

At this stage the findings of the research were to be reported in the dissertation. The data were also related to the Hannah narratives of 1 Samuel 1-2. This was done in order to ascertain how the Hannah narratives could relate and speak to the Karanga concerns of fertility and barrenness in the light of the phenomena of blessing and curse.

1.4 Survey of Literature

On reading the existing literature on 1 Samuel 1:1-2:10, I was mostly interested in locating the different interpretations by scholars. It seems to me that there is a development in the scholarly interpretation of 1 Samuel that moved from an interest in source analysis to literary criticism and then to a more pronounced theological interpretation.

Polzin (1989) concluded that the work was a literary effort and theological concern of the Deuteronomist. Fokkelman (1993) stated that Israel was experiencing moral and political problems. There was moral corrupt behaviour of the priesthood and the political lack of a leader and he added that “chapter one describes a course which leads from want to the lifting of that lack” (Fokkelman 1993: 1-2). In this context the initiative of a barren woman elevated her to be the heroine of the story and also made her the subject of the quest (Fokkelman 1993:1-2). Fokkelman continued that the setting of the stories led us to the understanding that “there was no king in those days to maintain law and order” (1993: 5). The narratives were, therefore, meant to explain the need and fulfilment of the need for a king.

However, scholarship developed further to recognise that the two books of Samuel represented Israel’s struggle to adopt its faith to radically changed social realities. Walter Brueggemann (1990) made a theological interpretation showing God’s providence. He grappled with the issue of theodicy, which was an attempt to solve the problem of justifying the concept of divine providence in the face of suffering.

Feminists have also interpreted 1 Samuel 1:1-2:10 as a text showing God’s providence to human power. God is interpreted as one who empowers barren Hannah by making her fertile. The powerless woman finds power in her fertility status and rises to praise God. M Callaway (1986) and Joan E Cook (1999) made significant feminist contributions, Callaway examines the feminine image of a barren woman in a patriarchal tradition. Cook looks at the type of barren women in the Old Testament, and shows how human initiative and the divine causality work together in barren mothers.

My dissertation seeks to develop further the theological interpretation of the books of Samuel, by examining 1 Samuel 1:1-2:10 in the context of fertility and barrenness as blessing

and curse. This reading is meant to relate to the Karanga understanding of fertility and barrenness. My contribution is to show how Biblical narratives could become a resource for ethical reflection in African communities such as the Karanga women.

In our present Christian community the function of Scripture is to inform and influence the morals or ethics of people, in the light of their vocation to worship God. But the way in which Scripture achieves this, depends on the interpretations given to it.

1.5 Definition of Key Concepts

The subject matter for discussion in this dissertation involves concepts of fertility and barrenness, blessing and curse, as key concepts in the discussion. In order to carry out the discussion in a more meaningful way one has to define the above key concepts. The definitions that I will furnish may not necessarily be in the classical manner, found in dictionaries, of defining words. They will be theological and textualised definitions so as to facilitate the discussion in the subsequent chapters.

A more helpful approach to the study of key terms is to define and point out the origins and context in which the terms were used both in the Ancient Near East and in the Old Testament.

1.5.1 Blessing

In the Ancient Near East the word *brk* is found in Semitic languages with two principle meanings. In the Akkadian and Aramaic languages it refers to "kneel", "make to kneel"; and the same meaning is found in Arabic. Secondly it refers to "bless" and this is encountered in the Ugaritic, Phoenician, Aramic and Arabic languages (Brown 1997: I:757). To kneel would also point to kneeling before a superior in the act of receiving a blessing (Brown 1997: I:757).

Keller says that the supreme important use of the word "blessing", in the Ancient Near East was in the form of a final "farewell" before death (Gen. 17, 48, 49; Deut. 33). This was done in the form of a "well wishing" statement (1997: I: 272).

In the Old Testament the term "blessing" is a religious word that is used in two ways: first as a benediction to employ the power of God over a person, or "bless" could also refer to giving, and blessed refers to one who received the gift.

At creation, blessing was given as the power to multiply. This was done in the formative empowering word. In Genesis 1:28 it says "be fruitful ... increase ... fill the earth." The blessing has a content of fertility to fill the earth (Brown 1997: 1:758). Brown (1997: 1:759) also quotes Westermann to have said that "the blessing that confers the power of fertility is inseparable from creation where the creator is the one who blesses and the created living being has the power to reproduce itself, because of the blessing".

This theme of blessing as fertility is continued in the Patriarchal blessing (Gen. 12-50): "I will make you a nation" (Gen. 12:1-3).

The bestowing of a blessing was also a priestly privilege. Priests in the Old Testament pronounced blessings. According to Deuteronomy 10:8 one of the key functions of priests was to pronounce a blessing (Brown 1997: 1:761).

1. 5.2 Curse

The Hebrew word *'rr* refers to a kind of banning or barring from benefits. Keller (1997:1) compares its use in different Ancient Near Eastern languages. The verb *'lh* sometimes refers to "realised curse" (Keller 1997: 1:113).

'lh indicates the curse "as a legal aid for securing an oath" (Gen. 24:41; Hos. 4:2; Neh. 10:30). In contrast *'rr* is "curse", "place under ban". This refers to a curse in its declaratory state, where a condition of curse is placed upon another person by the speaker. (McKeown 2003:84).

This shows that usage of the word could be used differently. For the purpose of writing this dissertation, the researcher will take the meaning of curse as "ban".

Urbrock (1997: I: 756) also agrees to the use of *'rr* as the term that is commonly used in the Old Testament to refer to a "decree" expressed by someone in authority to cause misfortune to the transgressor.

In the Deuteronomistic history the word commonly used is *'lh*. This has a clear theological dimension as sanction in the context of a covenant between Yahweh and Israel. The manifestation of curse is implied in the end of the covenant (Deut. 29:11-20; Neh. 10:30 and Deut. 30:7).

Urbrock's explanation that *'rr* can be used as an antonym to blessing strengthens the argument of this dissertation in the way blessing and curse is used (1997: I: 756). This research seeks to show that, in contrast to blessing, a curse reflects a breakdown of relationships (McKeown 2003:84). Curse is a ban that is pronounced to stop something that should have existed. In the context of fertility "curse" is the ban, or failure, or the stopping of fertility. This occurs only in situations where infertility has been bestowed by another person or superior power. Curse is a power that is evoked to use by another person or God. It does not operate on its own. An example of this is Genesis. 3:14-15: where God cursed the snake. Similarly Noah cursed Canaan (Gen. 9:25).

I am in agreement with the conclusion by Callaway (1986:15): "If an important form of blessing in the Ancient Near East is the blessing of fruitfulness, one of the major forms of curse is the curse of barrenness."

1.5.3 Barrenness

'qr is the Hebrew word for being childless, barren, sterile, and it refers to the failure to have children of either male or female gender. This may be caused by either natural or medical reasons. Callaway (1986) studied barrenness in the Ancient Near East. Her findings were that "childlessness in the Ancient Near East was clearly a serious problem for which as many legal and cultural correctives as possible were devised" (1986:15).

In the Old Testament barrenness was considered a curse or affliction (Gen. 10:18) sent by God. Hamilton (1997: 3:509) holds this idea and he furthermore asks the question: "If fertility

was one of God's blessings on Israel (Gen. 1:28; 9:7; Ps. 127:3-5), how else could barrenness be interpreted?" (Urbrock 1997: 3:509). The question leads toward explaining barrenness as a condition of curse.

It is important to mention that not all the cases of barrenness in the Old Testament were a cause of curse for disobedience. Compare as examples the cases of Sarah (Gen. 11:30), Rebecah (25:21), Rachel (29:31), Manoah's wife (Judg. 13:2), Hannah (I Sam. 1:5). In these stories barrenness comes as a desire of God to "close their womb". It is difficult to find a text in the Old Testament where a named woman is cursed with barrenness. The conditions of barrenness in the Old Testament seem to have been formulated as such, because none of them was permanent. In Exodus 23:26 and Deuteronomy 7:14 God promises that when his people settle in the land no one would know childlessness. Furthermore Psalm 113:9 says that the barren woman is the special object of God's grace. Further discussion of this will follow in the course of the dissertation.

1.5.4 The Context of Blessing and Curse in the Old Testament

There are two major contexts in which blessing and curse appear in the Old Testament. These are the contexts of relationships and that of fertility and barrenness. References to blessing and curse appear most frequently in the Pentateuch. Later in the Old Testament, blessing is also found in the Psalms, the prophetic literature and in the wisdom literature. In order to maintain the logic of the dissertation discussion, the research will discuss at length blessing in the context of fertility when defining the concepts of fertility and barrenness.

However, I do not wish to bypass the context of relationships, although it is not really needed in the relevance of this dissertation. In passing I will provide a few examples of the above. McKeown (2003:84) lists other contexts of blessing and cursing. His identified contexts agree with those also listed by Urbrock (1992:1.757) in his article on blessing and curse in the Anchor Bible Dictionary. The two seem to agree that one major context is that of the relationship between two people or parties. An example of this is that God bestows blessing on those in good standing with him (Gen. 88:21 – 9:17). Blessing is also bestowed in times of crisis, for example Eli blessed Hannah and Elkanah in their time of need (I Sam. 2:20-21). Blessing can also be evoked when someone is undertaking an important journey (Gen. 24:7).

Furthermore one generation can pass blessings to another. A good example of this is the case of Isaac and Jacob who bestowed blessings upon their sons (Gen. 17:48-49).

In contrast with blessing, curse reflects a breakdown of relationships (McKeown 2003:84). A good example is that of the Garden of Eden story (Gen. 3:14-15 – 17-19). Similarly Noah cursed Canaan (Gen. 9:25).

The call of Abraham marks the new era of a new relationship of humankind with God, one that is full of blessings. The call ends the era of curse in the relationship of God and humankind.

1.6 Structure of Dissertation

This dissertation comprises of four chapters, and the contents of the next three chapters are discussed briefly below.

Chapter 2

Social Rhetorical Analysis of 1 Samuel 1:1-2:10

In this chapter I will make use of the socio-rhetorical reading of 1 Samuel 1:1-2:10. This will include an application of all the five textures of the socio-rhetorical method; that is an examination of the inner texture, intertexture, social and cultural textures, ideological texture, and the sacred texture. This will be done as a method of exegesis that will enable one to read the message of the text in a more contextual way. This exegesis is done in order to facilitate the next chapters that relate the text to the context of the Karanga people.

Chapter 3

Karanga Women's responses to Barrenness and Fertility and their reading of 1 Samuel 1:1-2:10

This chapter provides the perspectives on fertility and barrenness within the Karanga culture. This will include the data obtained from the empirical research that focuses on reading the text together with the Karanga women. Karanga women's interpretation of the text will be

reported and analysed. Concepts and word study of words that are used in the language of fertility and barrenness will be undertaken. These are words such as *Ngomwa* and *Ruware* that are investigated in the questionnaire. It is presumed that some more words and concepts may emanate from the interviews.

Chapter 4

Continuity and discontinuity between Karanga and the Old Testament

Chapter Four relates fertility and barrenness as blessing and curse in the context of the Hannah narratives, (1 Samuel 1:1-2:1) to the experiences of the Karanga people.

In this chapter, I will provide a conclusion that will analyse the theological and ethical implications of the study.

In the following chapters a detailed discussion follows to prove the hypothesis of this dissertation.

CHAPTER TWO

A SOCIAL RHETORICAL READING OF 1 SAMUEL 1:1-2:10

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I intend to undertake a social rhetoric interpretation of 1 Samuel 1-2:10, using the method of Vernon Robbins. This exegesis is done in order to prepare for the next chapter which relates to the Karanga women's reading of the narrative and prayer of Hannah. My bias as a Karanga woman and a pastor, who has experienced the suffering of barren women both in the family and in church and societies around me, may be reflected in the way I interpret this text. I will begin with the inner texture and then move on to the intertexture. At the latter stage, I will combine the cultural intertexture and the social and cultural texture. This will be done for two reasons, firstly to avoid repetition, and secondly to provide a more detailed analysis because the cultural intertexture is of major concern in my dissertation. It is my aim to analyse how an ancient culture influences and forms or speaks to the culture of Karanga women today. The text we are reading in this dissertation was formed in its own culture, but it nevertheless remains a biblical text that is informative of its culture and formative to other cultures of today. I will also examine the ideological texture and lastly the sacred texture in that order.

2.2 Inner Texture of 1 Samuel 1:1-2: 10

This texture examines the language of a text. It is found in the repetition of words and use of dialogue (Robbins 1996:7). It "focuses on words as tool for communication" (1996:7). The interpreter removes meaning from words and listens to the way the text uses the words in a stage. The purpose of this is to ascertain the word patterns, voices, structures and modes in the text (Robbins 1996:7). The study of inner texture involves repetitive, progressive, narrative, open and closing, argumentative, and sensory-aesthetic textures. The following study of the inner texture of 1 Samuel 1:1-2:10 will engage all the aspects of the inner texture and discover the meaning of words before interpretation of the text.

2.2.1 Repetitive Texture and Pattern

This examines the repetition of words, phrases, topics, pronouns, conjunctions or adverbs.

The diagrams below reflect a study of Repetitive Texture and Pattern.

TABLE 1: REPETITION OF MAJOR CHARACTERS IN 1 SAM: 1:1–2:1-10

Verse	Lord	Eli	Elkanah	Hannah	Peninnah	Sons	Children	Priest
1:1			X			XXXX		
1:2				XX	XX		XX	
1:3	X	X				X		X
1:4			X		X	X		
1:5	X			X				
1:6	X							
1:7	X			X				
1:8			X	X		X		
1:9	XX	X		X				X
1:10	XX							
1:11						X		
1:12	X	X						
1:13		X	X					
1:14		X						
1:15	XX			X				
1:16								
1:19	X	X						
1:18								
1:19	XX		X	X				
1:20	X			X		X		
1:21	X		X					
1:22	X						X	
1:23	X		X			X		
1:24	X						X	
1:25		X					X	
1:26	XXX							
1:27	X						X	
1:28	XX							
2:1	XXX			X				
2:2	XX							
2:3	XX							
2:4								
2:5							X	
2:6	X							
2:7								
2:8	X							
2:9								
2:10	XX							

This table shows a repetition of major characters. The Lord is repeated thirty- six times from (1:3 to 2:10). The priest has nine references from (1:3 to 1:25), Elkanah has six- references from (1:1 to 1:23), Hannah has ten references from (1: to 2:1) and the sons or children have seventeen references from (1: to 2:5). This repetition suggests that the Lord is the central subject judging from the number of the references. In addition to the Lord, the children and Hannah are also major characters in this text.

The pattern in which the characters are spread in the text, show that only the Lord, Hannah and children, appear throughout the whole text of chapter 1 into chapter two, while Elkanah and Eli are not mentioned in the song. This suggests that the Lord, Hannah and children are also major subjects in the song of Hannah.

TABLE 2: REPETITION OF MAJOR TOPICS IN 1 SAM. 1 – 2:1 – 10

Verse	Prayer	Sacrifice	Worship	Fertility/Barrenness
1:2				had children; had no children
1:3		Sacrifice	Worship	
1:4		Sacrifice		
1:5				closed her womb
1:6				closed her womb
1:10	present herself before the Lord			
1:11				remember me; give a male child
1:12	praying			
1:13	praying			
1:15	pouring out my soul			
1:19			worshipped	Knew his wife. The Lord remembered her
2:1		Sacrifice		
2:6	praying			
2:7	prayed			
2:1	prayed			
2:5				barren, has not borne

There are topics that may be developed to separate themes which have been repeated several times in this text. The topic of prayer or worship was repeated eight times from (1:3 to 2:1). This topic seems to stretch right through the text. This repetition makes prayer or worship a central theme that holds and guides the discussions of the text. This theme is expanded by one of the articles of worship or prayer, which is sacrifice. Sacrifice was repeated three times and is mentioned in both Chapters 1 and 2. In both instances, worship starts with sacrifice and ends with prayer, this could have been the order in which the Israelites worshipped God.

There is also a repetition of the topic of fertility and barrenness, which is done in its negative and positive senses. We read in the text about "having children", "had no children", "closed her womb", "The Lord remembered her", and "barren", "has not borne" (1:1 to 2:5). This theme or topic seems to be a major concern of the text, right from the introduction of the text up to its conclusion. The theme of fertility and barrenness is contained in different reproductive terminologies that are found in the text. Examples of this are "remember," "knew his wife," "bore" and "closed her womb"

Barrenness is given as the purpose for all the actions in the text. This is revealed in the following order: In verse 1-3 the family is introduced and Hannah's barrenness is mentioned. In Verses 4-6 the closing of Hannah's womb is double mentioned. Verses 7-8 Hannah could not eat because of her barrenness. Verses 9-16 Hannah prayed for her infertility. Verses 17-20 Hannah's prayer was remembered by the Lord and she bore a son. Verses 21-28 Hannah offers the child as a result of her fertility vow.

Chapter 2:1-10 Hannah rejoices over her gift of fertility. This analysis shows that the theme of fertility and barrenness is the key to the text.

TABLE 3: REPETITION OF PRONOUNS "I", "YOU" AND NEGATIVES "NO", "NOT"

Verse	"I"	"You"	"No"	"Not"
1:2	I		no children	
1:7				not eat
1:8	Am I	to you		not eat
1:11		only you; your servant; your servant; you as	no razor	I not; not forget
1:14		you make yourself your wine		
1:15	I am; I have; But I have		no my Lord; neither, nor	
1:17		you have made		
1:18		your servant; your sight		
1:22				not go
1:22	I will bring; I will offer			
1:23		to you; until you		
1:26	I am	As you live; in your		
1:27	I made; I have			
1:28	I have			
2:1	I rejoice			
2:2			There is no; no rock like	
2:3		your mouth	no more	Let not

This table shows a pattern of repeated pronouns: "I", "you" and negatives "no" and "not".

The pronoun "I" has eleven references, while the pronoun "you/your" has fifteen references.

The pronoun "I" is found from 1:8 up to 2:1 in the text. This shows that this individualistic pronoun stretches across the whole text. Also "you", "your" are found in 1:8 to 2:6, which also shows that it is spread right through the text. The pronouns "I" and "you" are individualistic in nature. They point and refer to individuals in the text. These pronouns make the text or the actions in the text belong to certain pointers to individuals who play a certain role or who own something in the text. These pronouns make the reader of the text realise some sense of particular belonging of characters in the text who either belong to other characters or who are responsible for certain actions that they have undertaken or will do in future.

An example of this is the way Hannah refers to herself in the text. She speaks as one who belongs to Yahweh (vv 11,18) "your servant", This is different from individualistic terms, discussed above.

There are also repeated pronouns that make Hannah responsible for most actions that are done or that are to be done in the text. An example of this is "I have been pouring" (v 15), "I will bring, I will offer" (v 22), "I made" (v 27), "I rejoice" (2:1). The "I" that is repeated in the text, makes Hannah a major character who performs most of the actions in the text. The "I" also portrays Hannah as a self-centred woman who does not seem to recognise the family context in which she belongs. She does this by opting to do major family activities alone. She "brings", she "offers", she "makes the vow" and she rejoices alone. The family togetherness that exists at the beginning of the text seems to have been discontinued at the end of the narrative, where Hannah is found operating like a single parent. One can say that Elkanah was negligent in his duties as a father of the family, and that Hannah behaves like a neglected mother.

There is also a repetition of the negatives, "no" and "not". The negative "no" has seven references and "not" has six references. These negatives make the reader of the text realise that there was some negativity prevalent in the text. There was some action done or some force that worked against the will of good. For example there was "no eating" (vs. 7 and 8) which was a negative behaviour. There were also "no children" (v. 1:1) which denotes a vacuum and "no rock like" (v. 2:2) which is comparative. The "no" and "not" negatives refer to a lack of something, or a comparison of power or a reminder about something. In general the negatives show us that there was an existence of opposite situations at one given time. There was an existence of the opposite of situations, like:

v. 1:1	having children	no children
v.1:7-8	eating	not eating
v.1:11	forget	not forget
v.1:22	go	not go

This shows that there were two forces working against each other in the text: positive and negative. But at the end of the text, the use of the negatives is that of exalting the force of good, or the power of Yahweh. This is as shown below:

v.2:2	no-one beside You
v.2:2	There is no; no rock like our God.
v.2:3	Talk no more
v.2:3	Let not arrogance come from you

These expressions contain negative pronouns that express conquest of the negative situation by the positive situation of the people in the text.

TABLE 4: REPETITION OF MAJOR PLACES

Verse	Shiloh	Ramah	House of the Lord / Temple
1:1		Ramathaim	
1:3	Shiloh		
1:7			House of the Lord
1:9	Shiloh		Temple of the Lord
1:19		Ramah	
1:24	Shiloh		House of the Lord

This table shows the pattern of the repetition of major places in the text. "Shiloh" is repeated three times. The "House of the Lord" or "temple" is repeated twice. Shiloh is mentioned as a cultic centre for Ancient Israel and mentioned here as a place where the family of Elkanah went to worship annually. The assumption given to the reader by this repetition is that the family of Elkanah was a true Jewish traditional family who held fast to Jewish worship systems. The repetition of the "House of the Lord" emphasises the importance of cultic places in worship. It would seem that the people of this time preferred to worship, pray, and sacrifice in the House of the Lord. Cultic places seem to be important places in the text.

Ramathaim has two references. It is emphasised as the place of origin of the family in the text. A detailed discussion of this place will be done later in this exegesis.

A summary of the repetitive tables, by way of clustering the repetitive data, would leave us with three rhetorical topics that seem to be major aspects in the text. Firstly there is a repetition that features the Lord, Hannah and children. Secondly there is the repetition that features Shiloh, prayer and sacrifice as forms of and places for worship. Thirdly one has the repetition that features fertility and barrenness.

TABLE 5: PROGRESSION OF GENDER TERMS AND ACTIVITIES

Verse	Man	Woman	She / Her	He / Him
1:1	man			he
1:3				he would give
1:4			her sons and daughters	his wife
1:5			her; her womb	he gave; he loved
1:6			her rival; provoke her; irritate her; closed her womb	
1:7			she went up; provoke her	
1:8			her husband; said to her	
1:9			presented herself	
1:10			she was	
1:11	male child		she made	him; his death; he shall; his head
1:12			she continued; her lips; her voice; she was drunk; Eli said to her	
1:15		I am a woman		
1:16		worthless woman		
1:18			she said; her husband; her countenance	
1:19			remembered her	his wife
1:20			she said, she named	asked him
1:21	man			
1:22			she said to her husband	offer him
1:23		woman	her husband said to her; she weaned	weaned him
1:24			she took him; she brought	weaned him; took him; him
1:26		woman	she said	
1:28				lent him; let him

Table 5 reveals a progression in the texture of gender terms and activities. The text starts with male dominance of activities and ends up with female dominance. The woman is the one who gives suggestions, prays, sacrifices, dedicates the child and praises God. The man who sacrifices at the beginning of the text is later taken over by the woman.

TABLE 6: PROGRESSION OF EATING AND DRINKING

Verse	Eat	Drink
1:7	not eat	
1:8	not eat	
1:9	had eaten	and drunk
1:11		drink
1:13		was drunk
1:14		drunken spectacle
1:15		have drunk – nor strong drink
1:18		drank

This table provides another aspect of progressive texture: the progression of not eating to eating and drinking. The story moves from a situation where Hannah could not eat, to a situation where she was able to eat and drink. This sketches to us two major scenes in the text: the scene of being unhappy and not eating, and the scene of being happy and eating. According to the context of the story, one could also say that the eating and drinking could be indirect reference to sexual activity. That Hannah could not eat may symbolise her failure to have sex with her husband, because of any number of reasons. The eventual eating and drinking could, therefore, mean that Hannah later had sex with her husband, (Cook 1999:37). The reasons for assuming this are that the reference to Hannah's eating only involves her

husband, and not the rest of the family members. She ate only with her husband and could not eat in the presence of the other family members. The other pointer to eating as sexual act is that when she ate she was sad no more, (v 18), suggesting that she had been made happy in the process. It could also mean that she was happy after sex because she expected to be pregnant taking it from the blessing of the priest. The change of her mood may also refer to physical change of structure.

The following are scenes of the text that are based on repetition and progression textures.

I 1 Samuel 1:1-8 Family history and life order

1:1 man Ramathaim ----
 2 had children -- no children
 3 --..... Shiloh --.....worship, sacrifice
 4 sons and daughters-- --
 5 --..... --..... closed her womb --
 6 --..... provoked her
 --..... provoked her closed her womb --
 7 her husband..... -- --not eat
 8 --..... -- --not eat

2. 1 Samuel 1:9-17 Prayer session of Hannah

9 eaten, drunk..... presented herselfEli..... before the Lord
 --..... temple of the Lord
 10 prayed.....--..... Lord of hosts
 11 --..... remember me
 not forget your servant
 12 --..... prayingEli..... before the Lord
 13 was drunk..... praying silently.....Eli
 14 drunken spectacle. Eli
 15 have drunk neither pouring out my soul

16 I am a worthless woman speaking out of anxiety
 17 --..... go in peace
 --..... grant the petition

3. 1 Samuel 1:18-20 The birth of Samuel

18 went to her quarters eat and drank her husband
 19 rose early morning worshiped
 went to house at Ramah knew his wife
 Lord remembered her
 20 asked him..... conceived
 of the Lord bore a son

4. 1 Samuel 1:21-28 Yearly sacrifice and paying of the vow

21 the Lord.....sacrifice went up
pay vow.....
 22 the Lord.....weaned him not go up
 bring down
offer him appear in the presence
 23 the Lord.....weaned him
weaned him
 24 the Lord..... took him up
 brought him
 26 my Lord praying
 my Lord in your presence
 the Lord
 27 the Lord..... I prayed
 has granted me
 28 to the Lord..... I have lent
 to the Lord..... he is given
 for the Lord she left him

5. 1 Samuel 1:1-10: The Song of Hannah

Progression of the attribute of the “power” of Yahweh

negative	positive
2-	Rock
4-	bows of the warriors are broken
6	brings deathmakes alive
	brings down to graveraises up
7	sends povertysends wealth
	humblesexalts
8	--raises the poor
	--lifts the needy
	--sets the with princes
	--has them inherit a throne of honour
	--foundations of earth are his
	--sets the world
9	wicked are silenced in darknessguard the feet of saints
10	those who oppose will be shattered
	will thunder against them
	--will judge the earth
	--will give strength to the King
	--exalt the horn of his anointed

The prayer can be divided into two petitions. The first one is from (vv 1-5) and is about personal expressions of the feelings of one who is delivered. In these cases Hannah sings about her joy of exultation, and expresses how she regards the power of Yahweh. She compares Yahweh to a rock that breaks other powers. She mentions her change of condition from barrenness to fertility, and she exaggerates it with having given birth to seven children.

The second petition is from (vv 6-10) and this concerns the attribute of power of Yahweh. Yahweh is seen as one who is responsible for all life situations, one who owns the earth and the one who rules over it.

The five repetition and progression scenes shown above, help us to see the development of the text from one scene to another. The scenes also provide us topics for the rhetorical study of the text. One reads from one scene to another and sees how each scene influenced the other (Robbins 1996:10).

In this text, *scene one* introduces the background of the family and that they came from Ramah. The family had a polygamous status and a problem of barrenness on the part of the senior wife. The scene also tells us that the family was religious and kept to the religious calendar of the Israelites (Klein 1983:6-7).

The *second scene* emphasises the depth of the barrenness problem of Hannah and tells us about her decision to pray and her vow to the Lord. In the same scene we read about the granting of the petition.

In the *third scene* a male child, Samuel, is born and named. The meaning of the name is given, "because I asked him from the Lord." The child is named in response to the granting of the petition made: "The Lord remembered her" (v.9).

The *fourth scene* relates to the family's sacrifice and paying of the vow of dedication of the child. The child is dedicated and given to the Lord by his mother after she weaned him.

The fifth and last scene of the text is about the song of Hannah. This is a song of thanksgiving that is expressed in the attributes of the power of the Lord.

These scenes also help us to realise the opening-middle-closing texture and pattern of this text. This means that the text opens and closes on several occasions, as it introduces a new scene and its theme. The opening scene of the text begins with the introduction of Eli's family (1:1-6) as a theme. The social and religious background of the family is also included in this theme.

The effect of the life of the family reaches a conclusion in the birth and dedication of Samuel (1:19-28). This conclusion creates a context for a new beginning, the Song of Hannah, 1 Samuel 2:1-10. The context of this song is the birth of Samuel. Hannah sings a song of thanksgiving and praise to God. The song opens with the attributes of the power of God (2:1-10a). The last portion of the song (v.10 b) introduces and closes another new dimension of the song of Hannah. This verse opens a discussion on kingship and closes it by showing that God exalts the power of his anointed. The verse moves from talking about barrenness and fertility into talking about kingship (Baldwin 1988:54-57).

2.2.3 Narrational

The drama in the text contains narration. The opening words in the text, "There was a certain man of Ramathaim..." automatically presuppose a narrator. The progression of the story is expressed, not only by different scenes and themes that develop one into the other, but also by the way the narrative is told.

The narrator introduces the characters in the story. The setting of the characters is that of a family census. The narrator of the story also gives us the social background of the family and that there were love and humiliation. After this introduction, the characters start in their dialogue.

In his book "Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel," J.P. Fokkelman (1993:4) provides the following structure of the narrative:

Sequence	Brief description	Verses
1	static timeless introduction; family members presented	1-2
2	exposition: background, love and humiliation	3-8
3	commencement of the plot: vow to God by Hannah	9-11
4	obstacle: Eli's misunderstanding; Hannah's explanation	12-18
5	success: prayer answered; birth and naming	19-20
6	Hannah stays in Ramah nursing until she weaned	21-23
7	success: Hannah returns to Shiloh; vow kept; child is given to the Lord	24-28

In this composition Hannah emerges as the heroine of the narrative (Fokkelman1993:4). She is the one actor who is found from beginning to end of the narrative and is highlighted at the two peak points of the narrative, when the narrative acquires success, v.12-18 and v 24-28, where Hannah is portrayed as one who succeeds in the narrative.

In the narrative there are three major characters who speak and constitute the story after the narrator had introduced them. These are Elkanah, Hannah and Eli (NRSV):

- Elkanah:* Hanna, why do you weep? Why do you not eat? Why is your heart sad? Am I not more to you than ten sons? (v.8)
- Hannah:* O Lord of hosts, if only you will look on the misery of your servant, and remember me, and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a male child, then I will set him before you as a Nazarite¹, until the day of his death. He shall drink neither wine nor intoxicants and no razor shall touch his head (v.11).
- Eli:* How long will you make a drunken spectacle of yourself? Put away your wine (v.14).
- Hannah:* No my lord, I am a woman deeply troubled; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the Lord. Do not regard your servant as a worthless woman, for I have been speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation all this time (v.15-16).
- Eli:* Go in peace, the God of Israel grant the petition you have made to him (v.17).
- Hannah:* Let your servant find favour in your sight (v.18).
- Hannah:* As soon as the child is weaned, I will bring him, that he may appear in the presence of the Lord, and remain there for ever; I will offer him as a Nazarite for all of time (v. 22).
- Elkanah:* Do what seems best to you, wait until you have weaned him, only may the Lord establish his word (v.23).
- Hannah:* Oh my Lord! As you live, my lord, I am the woman who was standing here in your presence, praying to the Lord. For this child I prayed; and the Lord has granted me the petition that I made to him. Therefore, I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he lives, he is given to the Lord (v.26-28).

The narrator of the story prepares a background before each character speaks.

Elkanah speaks only twice at the beginning and in the middle of the story. In his first speech he responds to the behaviour of Hannah: "She wept and could not eat" (v.7). Elkanah endeavours to comfort her (Smith 1899:7). He tries to express the depth of his love for Hannah by saying: "Am I not more to you than ten sons?". Eslinger (1985:75) points out the

¹ Nazarite: one separated or one consecrated for the Lord.

narrator's emphasis on the close relationship of Elkanah to Hannah by attaching his narrative, the seemingly redundant description "her husband" to the proper name Elkanah. Eslinger mentions that Elkanah is never referred to as Peninnah's husband (1985:75). After this speech of assurance of love, Elkanah only speaks again after the child is born of Hannah (v. 23). This speech comes towards the end of the narrative. Elkanah lovingly gives leeway to his wife Hannah to do what she thinks is best for her. This comment is full of respect and love considering that it is coming from a man in a patriarchal culture, whose culture looks down upon women. The narrative in Elkanah's speech moves us into the insight of the social cultural texture. Elkanah does not force Hannah to go and fulfil the vow, instead he does his part.

Hannah emerges as the most outspoken speaker in the text, who speaks five times, and appears in all stages of the text. She also makes the longest speeches in the narrative. Hannah is the one who takes the initiative to pray and vow to God, for a child (v. 9-11). Gordon (1986:75) says her request is specifically for a son, and she makes a Nazarite vow on his behalf.² On the other hand Eslinger thinks that it was in desperation that Hannah turns to Yahweh due to her childlessness. Further he says,

As the reader reads about her bitterness of soul and about her cries and prayers to Yahweh he is being allowed to share the narrator's knowledge that, ironically, Hannah is seeking help from exactly the right source. Though Hannah does not know it, Yahweh is the one who sealed her womb" (v.5, 6) (Eslinger 1985:76-77).

The reference by Eslinger that Hannah does not seem to be aware that Yahweh closed her womb is evident in Hannah's speeches, because she does not seem to mention it in any way.

² For the hairstyle and for full Nazarite vow also involved abstention from strong drink, see Numbers 6:1-21. It is a lifelong consecration to God.

The way the narrator tells the story makes each event reflect the divine plan. The story flows to the end in the form of a road that was walked in order to reach a destination.

Gordon (1986:77) says:

According to the law of the vow (women's regulations) Num. 30:6-15, a husband had power or veto of any vow undertaken by his wife. However, in the Hannah story this is a mere technicality... . Elkanah happily plays second fiddle, ... (v. 23) he invokes divine assistance towards its fulfilment.

On the same note Hertzberg (1964:28) says: "the writer assumes that the husband had accepted what his wife has determined as a matter of course. This is in accordance with the regulations for vows in Num. 30". The reader of this narrative may want to assume that Elkanah had no chance to refuse the vow of Hannah since he had set himself on a task to love her.

Klein (1983: 10) suggests that the detail contained in the items taken by Hannah to Shiloh for sacrifice, show a sign of good preparation on her part. On the other hand the quantities and ages of animals seem to have been traditional.

In addition to this, McCarter (1980:63) suggests that

the narrator could have copied the quantities from other sacrificial stories so as to make his narrative more valid. The three year old bull is also used in (Gen. 15:0; Ezek 42:6 and Eccles 4:12), and in Ancient Mesopotamian cultic practices. The figurative three is maintained. The specification of age could just mean that the animal was of legal maturity for sacrifice according to the laws of the time.

Smith (1988:12) also adds that the tradition of an *ephah* of flour is also found previously in the Judges story of Gideon's offering: (Judg 6:19). All this shows that the narrator only used traditional detail of the items of sacrifice to tell about Hannah's sacrifice. The use of old detail helps to authenticate the story.

The last speech of Hannah, at the dedication of the child, is very detailed. It would seem that the intention of the narrator was to give us a recollection of what had taken place before. Hannah tries to recall the priest's remembrance in her speech. Baldwin (1988:54) says that Hannah gives a testimony that impresses Eli. There is so much repetition of words in this testimony: "the Lord", "prayed", or "petition", "child", and "he" are repeated several times. These words work as reminders to key concepts of the narrative.

"The Lord"	-	who closes and opens the womb
"prayed"	-	as a working tool to the opening of the womb
"petition"	-	that was heard and answered
"child" / "he"	-	becomes the answer to the petition. He is the central gift of the narrative. His expectancy sustains the whole narrative. He is the "hope" in the narrative.

The recount of Hannah takes the reader back to the beginning of the story and moves through to its conclusion. This testimonial speech will be examined further in the subsequent textures of this text.

Eli the Priest is the third character who is made to speak by the narrator and Eli represents the Lord by his priestly position. The narrator sets a stage where the priest is sitting by the door of the temple, watching the woman pray. The Biblical narrative does not furnish us with the

details of the door where he was sitting. One could surmise that it was the outer door of the temple, used by everyone to enter the temple. Another guess would be that if this temple had the typical plan of the Jewish temples, then it must have had the women's court next to the outer part, and probably Hannah was praying in there. According to Jewish customs, priests resided by the temple. The text tells us that Eli and his two sons resided at Shiloh. This makes Eli's position and presence quite legitimate (Birch 1998:2:975) His sitting position was strategic enough for him to see Hannah, because as a woman, she worshiped in the outer, the women's court. This could have been closer to the door so that the priest could see her lips move as she prayed (vv. 13-14).

Eli spoke only twice in the whole narrative: (v14, 17). His sentences were very short, and he did not give long speeches like Hannah. Eli only spoke in the middle of the narrative. Only when Eli spoke did the narrative take a turn. Things change in the life of Hannah. Nothing much had changed in her life until the priest spoke his word. Although Eli spoke twice it was in the same discourse that he held with Hannah. One could, therefore, say Eli spoke at one given time but he said two things.

The first was a rebuke for Hannah because Eli had mistakenly suspected her of being drunk (v. 14). It would seem that drinking was common at sacrificial meals (Hertzberg 1964:25). Eslinger (1985:78) goes further in his quote of Willis, saying "Eli's misjudgment of Hannah's mental state is the beginning of the contrast between Hannah / Samuel / Israel and the Elides". This could be a true assessment of the story as a whole. But for the first reader of the narrative one would be made to think that, if drinking was common in the custom of those who came to sacrifice, then Eli could have been right to suspect her of drunkenness. In

addition the narrator is silent about other actions that Hannah could have been performing in her prayer that could eventually lead Eli to such conclusions.

Instead of giving details about Hannah's behaviour, Eslinger (1985:78) says, "the narrator leads the reader to favour Hannah, by allowing him a privileged insight into Hannah's thought – but only an external view of Eli"

The response of Hannah was so convincing that it made the priest realise his error and change his views very quickly. In his response Eli invoked a blessing as befitting a priest of the Lord (Num 6:22-27; Dt 10:8). This is the only passage in the Old Testament where a priest blesses an individual worshipper (Gordon 1986:75). Hertzberg (1964:25) says that this salutation of peace was regularly used in the Arabian East for those departing on a journey. But this consoled Hannah and she left and went to her quarters in peace (v. 18). Baldwin (1988:53) also says Eli did not merely bless Hannah, but he added his priestly prayer: "Your petition which you have made, may the Lord grant it" (v. 17). It would seem that the petition was granted because Hannah asked for it, with all her heart and hope for an answer.

The verb to "ask" is also repeated in vv. 27-28. It would seem that the child was given, because he was asked for. Hannah says it in vv. 27-28 with the implication that the child would not have been born if she had not asked for him. The verb "ask" becomes a key factor to the granting of a child to Hannah. This also corresponds to the name that Hannah gives to the child in verse 20: Samuel, "I have asked him of the Lord" (Baldwin 1988:53).

Summary of the Narrative

Examining the inner texture of 1 Sam 1–2 :10 has helped us to become better acquainted with the different units or scenes in the story. Secondly as a reader one is now able to identify the theme of the narrative through the repetitions that are in the text, the progression of one scene to another and the successes that are involved.

It is clear at this stage that the text is a narrative. This is shown by the way it is presented. The reported speech found in the first part of the text, v. 1-7 and also before each one of the characters speak, gives a representation of a narrator who tells a story as it happened.

The narrator continues his story by introducing Hannah's prayer immediately after she dedicates her child to God. The prayer comes like a continuation of the dedication. It is a prayer of thanksgiving given in the form of a **hymn**. It is, therefore, difficult to discuss the narrative birth story in isolation from the hymn of the thanksgiving, because the former provides a context to the latter. The question, however, arises as to with what care this hymn was inserted within the literary context (Polzin 1989:30).

The Hymn

The hymn starts by expressing the joy of the singer, Hannah. It moves on to describe what Hannah believes about God. The song is in four stages.

Stage One: v. 1-2 (NRSV)

The believer's doxology: "My heart exults in the Lord ..." This gives a description of the inner feeling of Hannah. Her joy is expressed.

Stage Two: v. 3-5

Warning to the arrogant: "Talk no more so very proudly..." This stanza sounds very intimidating and could be coming from the background of family politics. Hannah seems to have formed her hymn from her past experiences of barrenness and the taunts of Peninnah.

Stage Three: v. 6-8

Yahweh's rule:

"The Lord kills and brings to life...

The Lord makes poor and makes rich

He lifts the needy from the ash heap, ----

Make them sit with princes—

Pillars of the earth are the Lord's"

In this stanza Hannah shows the almighty power of God, that He is able to control nature, and that Yahweh is the great governor of life.

Stage Four: 9-10

The confidence of the believer is expressed: "He will guard the feet of his faithful ones ..."

The singer expresses confidence in the protection of the Lord (Smith 1988:14-16).

In a later stage of the study of Hannah, Polzin (1989:30) suggests that "We hear in the song of not one but three voices that cooperate to form 'polyphonic composition' that is harmonious and that looks back in history and forward into the future." This hymn, he says, has thematic variations on themes already met or soon to be encountered. The voices in the

song are those of (a) Hannah, the rejoicing mother; (b) the persona of a king; (c) the Deuteronomist, the "author".

It would seem clear from the above discussion that scholars agree that the literary form, suggests that it was a song. The only problem that we have is with the coherence of the hymn. When listening to the words of the hymn, there are two immediate observations: The issue of barrenness only appears in one sentence: "The barren has born seven...", v. 5b. The larger part of the hymn is about warning to the opponents and the power of Yahweh. These become central themes of the song. The concept of the child is overshadowed by the attributes of the power of God. One would think that Hannah had suffered so much taunting from her rival Peninnah, in such a way that the song of thanksgiving and praise also works as a song of pride of one who feels uplifted.

The second matter to note on the wording of the song, is the sudden talk of kingship, v. 10. This comes amidst the context of childbirth. It shifts the story of infancy to adulthood and kingship. This will be addressed later in the second stage of my exegesis, the intertexture.

Questions to be asked are: What does this hymn mean in itself, and what does it mean in the present context of the book? It is clearly noticeable that this is a hymn sung by a confident singer who believes in God. Another question: is the confidence in the hymn that of the attributed singer, or that of the author? Answers to these questions will be provided in the next stage of exegesis of the text.

2.2.4 Summary of the Inner Texture

The study of the inner texture of 1 Samuel 1-2;10 has helped us to identify the different themes which help us to read the text and to see the progression of the events of the narrative and that of the prayer of thanksgiving, as they all join to narrate the story of the birth of Samuel. The stories start with the scene of the family introduction. Then it moves to the conflict in the family. The conflict creates the stage for the prayer of Hannah, which ends with a blessing that moves Hannah back home in a happy mood. The answer to the prayer marks the second phase of the text. Samuel is born. The next stage is the paying of the vow, which includes the dedication of the child. The last stage is the prayer of Hannah in which she expresses who God is to her and to the rest of the people. These stages emanate from the language of repetition and progression of themes expressed in the text. Discovering the inner texture helps the reader to be able to read and understand the intertexture. The following is an examination of the intertexture of the text.

2.3 The Intertexture

This texture seeks to examine the nature and result of the process of configuration and reconfiguration of 1 Samuel 1:1–2:10. This will be achieved by looking at the oral-scribal, cultural, social and historical intertexture. The major task here is to examine the context of a text in relation to how it relates to other texts similar to it. This will help the reader to see how the setting of 1 Samuel 1:1–2:10 is influenced by other texts around it, in terms of its content and wording. In order to avoid repetition, I will discuss in more detail the cultural and social aspects of this text under the heading of social and cultural texture. As a way of introduction to this section of my discussion, I would like to introduce the Ancient Near East

context of barrenness and fertility. This context will help us to see how the story of the birth of Samuel was related to other earlier and later stories of the Old Testament.

2.3.1 Ancient Near East Context of Barrenness and Fertility

In her book, *Sing, O Barren One: A Study in Comparative Midrash*, Callaway (1986:13) gives a very detailed social context of the Ancient Near East on the issue of fertility. She says that "(i)n ancient Israel, as well as in other parts of the Ancient Near East, the primary obligation of a married woman was to bear children for her husband, particularly male children".

She continues that the epic literature of that time was designed to express the need for offspring. For example she cites two Ugaritic Epics:

The Legend of Krt: Krt is left a widower and childless by the catastrophic deaths of his wife and children.

The Legend of Dnil: Dnil gives oblations to his gods and lies on a couch of sackcloth because he has no son.

In both instances Baal intercedes for the man before El, and provides a wife who will bear seven children.

In the Akkadian *Legend of Etana*, Etana ascended to heaven on the back of an eagle to obtain the plant of birth and thereby have a son (Callaway 1986:13).

In addition Callaway (1986:13-14).shows that:

there were also legal documents in the Ancient Near East that included laws which provided for offspring for the husband of a woman who does not bear him children. These were such women like priestesses who could not bear by law, and the barren women.

This was found in the code of Hammurabi, Numbers 144-148. It provided for the man to marry a lay-priestess, or for the hierodule to give him a female slave to provide him with children. The second case occurs in the Nuzi tablets and it states the same. Egyptian texts from about 1100 BCE indicate that the solution of barrenness by a female slave bearing children was practiced in Egypt and Mesopotamia.

In Israel the Levirate law allowed a widow to have a child to secure the name of her husband. This is found in the case of Tamar (Gen 38). The right of a widow was not to marry, but to receive a child by her husband's brother (Callaway 1986:14).

The concern for children in the Israelite society is also expressed in the blessings for fertility that were bestowed on women. For example Rebecca was blessed by her family to be a mother of thousands, of ten thousands, before she left home for marriage with Isaac (Gen 24:60). Ruth was also blessed to have a child (Ruth 4:11-12). In addition, the words used are "fruitful", "multiply", "fill the earth" (Gen 1:28; 9:7; 12:2-3; 26:3-5). The renewal of this blessing was also done in Genesis 28:13-15 and Deuteronomy 28:104, but in this case it was contingent upon Israel's obedience. What it means is that blessing was later made conditional to obedience, suggesting that the barren were found to be disobedient. At this stage we start to read the change of course of fertility blessing as a rule of God to become more a conditional gift. This reading takes up the ideology of the Deuteronomistic, that every gift of God comes with conditions. It is in this context that we read the story of Hannah.

It is also good to take note of the perceptions of other cultures about fertility and barrenness. Lavine (1999:1:337) (in the *Encyclopedia of Women and World Religion*) give a broad summary of fertility cults of different religions and societies, as summarised below:

Many traditions believe that fertility is a reward for propitiation of certain deities or goddesses. In China and Japan, Kuan Yin is the female Buddha, believed to be the giver of children. Known as Hariti in Indian Buddhism, she is thought to be devourer and restorer of fertility. Among the Shakta tradition of Hindu, there is a secret ritual that evokes the goddess to make the womb fertile. The failure of a woman to produce a male heir is considered a calamity.

In North Africa, Sudan and Egypt there is the Zar cult, which incorporates both Christianity and Islam. The Zayran spirits are held responsible for fertility disorders. In this society children are the highest form of capital a woman can hope to have; failure to have them can cause grave consequences.

Lavine (1999:1:337) continue that "barren women in most religious traditions are met with varying degrees of disrespect, ranging from pity, to ostracism, to banishment from the social group. In many societies the state of being barren is considered a divine punishment that often has no religious remedy, which result in lack of status for a woman"

It is interesting also to have a feel of what other cultures have to say about barrenness, for it broadens the scope of this dissertation to see how fertility is understood in other religions and how barren women are perceived.

Reading about the social context of fertility and barrenness in the Ancient Near East, it is interesting to see the similarity that a barren woman was held with shame in such a way that her slave was given to her husband for a child.

Joan E. Cook (1999:10-11) says:

This biblical type of the barren mother involves a childless woman who bears a son through divine intervention, then takes steps to insure her son's success. The son in question serves a special function as leaders of the people---(Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Samuel). The deity acts not only in ----child bearing, but----in fulfilling of divine promise to Israel. In addition to Hannah---other women are childless. Sarah (Gen 11), Rebekah (Gen 25), Rachel (Gen 29), Samson's mother (Judg 13), The shunamite woman (2 Kings 4), and the woman in Esra's vision (2 Esdras 9:38-10:54).

These women lack the blame for their barrenness unlike the others who are said to have been cursed (Gen 20;17-18, Lev 20:20-21, 2 Sam 6:323, Job 18:19, Isa 14;22, and Hos 9:10-18)

Cook (1999:11) also states that the women in Hannah's context share with her the blame of barrenness inflicted on the woman and not the man. Hannah also, such as other women of her type, is found taking the initiative to find a solution for the problem.

2.3.2 Oral-scribal Intertexture

1 Sam 1-2:10 has a rich configuration of other texts that are within the Deuteronomistic history. The text contains a replication of other texts. Some of the replications are in the form of a *chreia*.³ The following are the replications that are identified and agreed upon by most scholars who suggest that there was replication.

³

Chreia is a brief statement or action that is attributed to a specific person (Robbins 1995:31).

1 Sam 1–2:10		Judges 13	
v.1	There was a certain man of Ramathaim ... whose name was Elkanah	v.2	There was a certain man of Zorah ... whose name was Manoah.
v.2	Hannah had no children	v.2	His wife was barren, having borne no children
v.11	But will give your servant a male child, then I will set him before you as a Nazarite until the day of his death. He shall drink neither wine nor intoxicants and no razor shall touch his head.	v. 36	You shall conceive and bear a son. Now be careful not to drink wine or strong drink, or to eat anything unclean, for you shall conceive and bear a son. No razor is to come on his head for the boy shall be a Nazarite to God from birth. It is he who shall begin to deliver Israel
v.18	The woman went to her quarters, ate and drank with her husband	v.6	Then the woman came and told her husband
v.21	The man Elkanah and all his household went up to offer to the Lord ... and to pay his vow	v.19	So Manoah took the kid with the grain-offering and offered it on the rock to the Lord

These examples show that the narrative of 1 Samuel 1 and Judges 13 has a great deal of similarity of language and content, as well as context of the birth of a son. The author of 1 Samuel 1 replicates and recontextualises the birth of Samson in Judges to that of Samuel. The author reconfigures the birth of Samson in a manner that makes the whole story new. Robbins (1996:50) says reconfiguration can make the later event "new" in such a way that it replaces or "outshines" the previous event in a manner that the previous event works as foreshadowing this occurrence.

The opening statement in both the stories introduces a man and his tribe. It would seem that this introduction is influenced by the introduction of the story of Judges 13:2. McCarter (1980:51) identifies other similar introductions in Judges 17:1, 19:1. He suggests that maybe

this was a common way of introducing narratives. The same identification is also made by Eslinger (1985:54). But this does not dismiss the question of replication in intertexture.

The other replication is in the vow of Hannah, that her son shall be made a Nazarite. The only difference is that, in the case of Samson, it is God who makes him a Nazarite.. Klein (1983:8) mentions that in the case of Samson and in Amos 2:11 one became a Nazarite at Yahweh's initiative and one would remain so throughout his life. This is not the case with Hannah and her son. It would seem that the conditions of raising a Nazarite mentioned in the text by Hannah (v. 11) were in accordance with the stipulated bylaws recorded in Numbers 6 (Baldwin 1988:52; Klein 1983:8).

In addition the context of barrenness is similar between Hannah and the mother of Samson. Another similarity is the corrective measure or promise to bear a son coming to the woman through an agent of the Lord.

There is also a recitation of the act of sacrifice in the birth of Samson and that of Samuel. In both cases the families went to sacrifice to Yahweh as a sign of thanksgiving for the good news. Polzin (1989:26-30) suggests that the mention of sacrifice is in the scheme of the "author", the Deuteronomist whose intention is to promote Yahwism.

In respect to these similarities one would want to acknowledge the possibility of either the same author or the same source to these two narratives. The narrative of the birth of Samuel seems to have been influenced by the birth of narrative of Samson, judging from the oral scribal intertexture studied so far. Another replication of the oral-scribal intertexture is observed in the similarities between the song of Hannah (1 Sam 2:1-10) and the song of the

victory of David (2 Sam 22).

1 Sam 2:1-10		2 Sam 22	
1	My mouth derides my enemies because I rejoice in my victory my strength (horn) is exalted in my God	4	I am saved from my enemies
		3	The Lord is ... the horn of my salvation
2	There is no rock like our God	32	Who is a rock except our God
4	but the feeble gird on strength	40	For thou didst gird me with strength for the battle
6	The Lord brings down to Sheol	6	The cords of Sheol entangle me
		48	God brought down people under me
7	The Lord makes poor and makes rich	28	Your eyes ... are on the exalted to bring them down
8	He raises up the poor from the dust	43	I beat [my enemies] fine as the dust of the earth
9	He will guard the feet of his faithful one	26	With the faithful one thou dost show thyself faithful
		34	He made my feet like hind's feet
		39	[My enemies] fell under my feet
9	but the wicked shall be cut off in darkness	29	My God lightens my darkness
10	The most High will thunder in heaven	14	The Lord thundered from heaven
	He will give strength to his King and exalt the power (horn) of his anointed	29	My God lightens my darkness
		51	The Lord shows steadfast love to his anointed Great triumphs he gives to his king.

(Polzin 1989:33-34)

The similarities of these two hymns of victory express either that they came from one author who purposely made the former a foreshadow of the latter, or that they were formulated from the same ideology. All these possibilities seem to be ideal, especially considering that the two are from one book and that the author of the book was one of Deuteronomistic history.

Scholars have formed different opinions on the hymn of Hannah. Polzin (1989:3) characterises the song of Hannah as a proleptic summary of David's final hymn, nicely

duplicating its triumphant tone. He further says that the voice of a triumphant king merges with that of an exultant mother. It would seem that the ideological motive of the two songs in their different contexts was similar. Eslinger (1985:102) suggests that there are at least two hermeneutic options for reading the song of Hannah. We may either read it as a hypothetical historical context, interpreting it as literary record of a specific socio-historical setting, or we could read it in its given context of a narrative. However, either of the two suggestions would leave the problem of similarities between the two songs unsolved. While the first suggestion seems more appropriate, it does not address the problem of different contexts and neither does it help to reconcile the gender difference of the hero and heroine of the two songs.

Scholars seem to agree that the song of Hannah is a copy of the Song of David that was put into the mouth of Hannah at a later stage of the birth narrative. This seems to be the work of the final redactor who wanted to emphasise the ideology of the Deuteronomistic historian, who wrote with the aim of promoting the power of Yahweh (Bailey 1995:3:213-214; Baldwin 1988:55; Lewis 1994:1:18). The final redactor uses the same song at the beginning and at the end of the books of Samuel in order to emphasise on the power of God, and to show how God intervenes and rules the lives of his people. One might also presume that the audience was in need of this consoling message.

I seem to agree with scholars who say this song was put into the mouth of Hannah, because very little of it mentions the concern of Hannah (having a child) which in the narrative works as a key drive. The context of v. 10 in which Hannah speaks about a king, makes it more suspicious, because at the time period of the Hannah narrative there was no king in Israel (Bailey 1995:3:214).

Bailey (1995:3:214) makes another observation: he says that there is a problem of originality even in the song of David itself, because it seems to be a duplicate of Psalm 18. The author of the two songs could also have not written the song in 2 Samuel 22. It could be the work of the final redactor who used Psalm 18 to make a summary of the life of David. If this was so, then it agrees very well with the positioning of the song of David which came at the end. It is also interesting to note that the two similar hymns in 1 Samuel 2:1-10 and 2 Samuel 22 occupy two strategic positions of the books of Samuel. One comes at the beginning and the other at the end of the books of Samuel. The questions that we may wish to pose at this stage are: Could this have been a planned style of the ideology of the author, or could we infer a theological purpose for the content and textual context of these two hymns? Answers to these questions will be addressed in the following textures.

2.3.3 Historical Intertexture

The historicity of this story is dismissed by most scholars. Lewis (1994) who worked on the textual history of the song of Hannah, confirms that a reconstruction of the text is very difficult in such a way that most scholars rarely attempt any type of reconstruction. Lewis (1994:19) says that the MT presents difficulties. Lewis further says that

it is rare to come across an article that is devoted to textual history of this text. The song of Hannah is a prime candidate for such an analysis. The text has a remarkable number of surviving witnesses, including fragments from 4Q Sam, many Old Latin manuscripts, Syro-Hexaplaric material and even a Syriac text from a Christian Palestinian herologion" (1994:19).

In respect of this the work of Polzin (1989) on Samuel and the Deuteronomist, shows that the text is not classical history, but a formulated historical narrative formulated by the Deuteronomist in order to explain the origin of kingship in Israel. This will be explained in the following textures.

2.3.4 Summary of Intertexture

At this stage we have managed to see that both the narrative and the hymn of Hannah do not stand alone in their context in form as well as content. They belong to other duplicate stories of the same author whom scholars suggested to be the Deuteronomistic historian. This means that the story of the birth of Samuel may have been influenced by other stories that preceded it.

2.4 Social and Cultural Texture

This texture examines the context in which people live in the world. A study of the social and cultural contexts of the story of Hannah will help to interpret the text in the context of Israelite life systems of the Old Testament.

2.4.1 Social Role of the Priesthood

There are different social roles that have been identified in the text, one of them that of the priest. The narrator presents Eli as a royal figure as well as a priest. He is presented as "one sitting on the seat" (v.9), as if he is waiting to judge (Polzin 1989:23). The text presents Eli's first reaction being that of judging, Hannah's behaviour. In this instance, Eli takes the

position of a judge, which was in accordance with the priestly duties of the time. According to the social history of Israel, the period of the Judges did not separate Judges from priests. The priests of the time also functioned as judges. So it was right for Eli to make a judgement although in this case, his judgement was not right. His reaction was that of making a "poor judgement" of Hannah's behaviour. Gordon (1986:75), explains the poor judgement of the priest by using his age as an excuse. Gordon pleads the priest's age, that he was old and his eyesight was now seriously deficient (1 Sam 3:2; 4:15). The priest acted as judge as an attempt to help in social control of the society by condemning some bad behaviour. Priests held a very high office not only religiously, but also socially in the context of the history of Israel. Priests were not only leaders of religion, but also had influence in the social set-up of the people of Israel. Miscall (1986: 4) says that priests also led people during times of war, and a good example of this is the ritual destruction of Jericho (Judges 6).

The narrator tells us that upon realisation of the right behaviour of Hannah during the discourse (verses 14-18), the priest changes from taking the **role of a judge** into taking a **priestly role** of "blessing Hannah" (v. 17). This was a role befitting a priest of the Lord (Num 6:22-27; Deut 10:8).

2.4.2 Nazarite

The second social role found in the text is that of a Nazarite (v. 11). Samuel was designated a special man set aside for the work of God by the vow of his mother. This role was to be in accordance with the stipulated regulation of a Nazarite as recorded in Numbers 6. It would seem that Hannah was aware of the social-religious office in her context, and may have been aware of the existence of Samson that she wished her son to be like Samson. It would seem

from the narrative that one did not have a choice of his own to be a Nazarite or not. This emphasize the role of a mother who chooses on behalf of her son and it is not God who makes the choice.

2.4.3 King

The third social role in the text was that of a king, as mentioned in the song of Hannah (v. 10). This social role is introduced metaphorically by the position of the priest. The key description of the place that Eli is sitting when he oversees Hannah, puts Eli in what Polzin (1989:23) describes as a zone of royalty. It would seem that the author of 1 Sam 1-2:10 was already trying to forge a way he used the social role of kingship. As if from nowhere Hannah is found mentioning the relationship of kings to Yahweh. But this seems a very well set strategic conclusion of the hymn, because it sets the tone for the next Chapter 3, where Samuel received his legitimate call to prophecy, for kingship.

2.4.4 Social Institution

Two major social institutions are involved in the text. These are Shiloh, as a religious social institution, and the family of Elkanah as another social institution.

2.4.4.1 Shiloh

According to the history of Israel, Shiloh is mentioned several times as a cultic place of worship. In the text Shiloh is mentioned as a cultic place where Elkanah and his family visited once every year to worship and sacrifice for the Lord, 1:3. Again in the same text (v.

24b) we read that the house of the Lord was at Shiloh. This suggests a temple structure that existed at Shiloh (1 Sam 1:9; 3:3).

It is at Shiloh that the priestly family of Eli resided. Also the Ark and the tent of meeting were found at Shiloh (1 Sam 2:22; 3:3). The sons of Eli, Phinehas and Hophni, ministered before the Ark at Shiloh (1 Sam 4:3-4). The Ark had been transferred from Bethel to Shiloh (Gordon 1986:73).

Shiloh is also a historic place in the book of Judges. Miscall (1986: 9-10) give the following details about Shiloh.

It is at Shiloh that the inheritance of many of the tribes were distributed "at the door of the tent of meeting" (Joshua 19:51). It is also at Shiloh that the sons of Eli lay with the women who served at the door of the tent of meeting (1 Sam 2:22). This bad act of the Elide sons defiled the cultic place and led to the end of the family of Eli (1 Sam 2:34).

The presence of the Ark of the Lord at Shiloh made Shiloh an inquiry place of the Lord. Hence Hannah came to inquire her petition at Shiloh. Also the Ark contained a revelatory function, because it contained the tablets given to Moses by the Lord (Exod 25:10; Deut 10:1-8).

The reference to Shiloh at the beginning of the book of Samuel is of strategic importance because it is later mentioned as the place where Samuel started his ministry. The status of Shiloh, however, is described by Miscall (1986:10) as

ambiguous in the sense that, it was the place for the distribution of the land to separate tribes, including Benjamin, but it was also the place used for the preservation of Benjamin (Judg 21).

Furthermore Miscall (1986:10) says that Shiloh has both a glorious and an ignominious past. It is here that Benjamin seized virgins during "yearly feast of the Lord" (Judg 21:19).

But the narrator of the text of 1 Samuel 1-2:10 does not give much historical detail about the place, in such a way that the status of the place remains open. 1 Samuel 7:16-17 tells us that Shiloh was later replaced by Bethel, Gilgal, Mizpah and Ramah. Later in 1 Kings 11-14 Shiloh appears as the home of the prophet Ahijah who later influenced the division of the monarchy.

2.4.5 The purity Codes and the Family of Eli as a social Institution

The family is the second social institution in the text. The text furnishes us with two families, that of the priest Eli and that of Elkanah.

The family of Eli is portrayed as a priestly family. The two sons Hophni and Phinehas are introduced first in the text (1 Sam 1:3) before their father (in 1 Sam 1:9). No detail is given about these sons in the text. Gordon (1986:73) makes a note that their names are "Egyptian, probably as a legacy from Israel's earlier history". Eli is introduced as the father of the two priests. The activities of these priests are not mentioned. Maybe the narrator introduced the priestly family prematurely in order to prepare the reader for the next episode of Hannah and Eli. This suggestion was made by Eslinger (1985:70), who says that the reader is prepared for future contrasts.

Miscall (1986:9) points out that:

the Elide family could have been descendants of Aaron. This is derived from Judg 20:27-28 which states, "Phinehas the son of Eleazar, son of Aaron, ministered ... in those days"

when the Ark was transferred from Bethel to Shiloh. There is also mention of Hophni and Phinehas ministering at Shiloh (1 Sam 4:3-4), suggesting that the family was also transferred.

The promise of priesthood made to the ancestors of Eli in Egypt (2 Sam 2:27) was made again to Phinehas forty years later (Num 25). This promise explains Eli as a descendant of Phinehas and Eleazer and this genealogy connects Eli with Aaron.

The narrator of the story is interested in presenting the priestly family and its duties. This is done in preparation of the downfall of the house of Eli at the rise of Samuel. Samuel who came as a blessing of Eli is ironic to the end of the house of Eli. At the end, the priestly family stands under the divine judgment of Yahweh. It would seem that the priest's reception of Samuel at Shiloh was ironic to the reception of the end of his house.

2.4.6 The Family of Elkannah as a social Institution and the social Relations involved

The second family who is discussed in the text is that of Elkanah. I will discuss this family together with its social relations in order to understand fully the social intertexture of 1 Samuel 1:1-2:10.

Gordon (1986:72) and Eslinger (1985: 68-69) discussed the family status of Elkanah quite clearly. The narrator of the text also made a detailed description of the family in his narrative.

- | | |
|---------|--|
| verse 2 | Elkanah had two wives. The name of the one was Hannah. The name of the other was Peninnah. Peninnah had children. Hannah had no children |
| verse 4 | On the day when Elkanah sacrificed he would give portions to his wife Peninnah and to her sons and daughters |

verse 5 but to Hannah he gave a double portion because he loved her.

verse 6 Her rival used to provoke her severely, because the Lord had closed her womb.

verse 7 It went on year after year. Hannah wept and would not eat.

verse 8 Elkanah said to her: "Am I not more to you than ten sons?"

The genealogy of Elkanah is given, tracing the Ephraimite descent of the family. This is done in a style of reporting history. Ancestors are named. Zuph, the last-named ancestor, gave his name to a place named Zuph for the Zuphites (1 Sam 9:5). The family is said to live at Ramathaim. Ramah is taken to be Samuel's home and native place [Hertzberg 1964:23; Eslinger 1985:66-67].

Eslinger (1985:67) continues that linear genealogies are normally used to link a descendant with an earlier ancestor for social, political or religious legitimisation. This is done in the Bible when important figures are introduced. They carry their genealogies, making the language of "son of" popular. An example of this is the story of David and that of Jesus. Their genealogy could also have been used to justify miraculous birth stories like in the birth of Samuel.

The motif of two wives, one barren and the other fruitful is used to introduce the wives. Their names are given with meanings that represent their characters in the story.

Hannah means "*charming*", reflecting that she was loved or it means "*grace*", pointing to the grace of God in that she bore a son. Peninnah means "*prolific*" or "*fecund*". Hannah had to share her husband with the depressingly fecund Peninnah. The text does not tell us that Hannah was the "*first wife*" despite the inference that one could make from the order of naming in the text. In addition the word "*other*" (v.2c) could point to Peninnah as "second wife" (Fokkelman 1993:16-17).

The names of the children of Peninnah are not given; they are identified only by their gender (sons and daughters). This may also mean that the gender of the child was very important in Jewish culture. As a result when Hannah asked for a child she was specific with regard to the gender of the child (male child, son, vv. 11, 20). On the other hand her choice of a son may have been in respect of the vow that she was going to make.

The family structure was that of polygamy. Although monogamy predominates in the Old Testament, there is evidence that a man quite often had two or more wives. Polygamy was tolerated under the Law of Moses (Deut 21:15-17), but it was not the original divine intention (Mt 18:3-8) and could cause great misery (Guthrie & Motyer 1979:287). Polygamy as a result was common among kings, for example David and Solomon. Polygamy in the context of kings could have been caused by political factors, but with others the marrying of a second wife may have been caused by the infertility of the first wife (Deut 21:15-17). This seems so in the case of Hannah and that of Sarah and Hagar (Gen 11:29-30).

Hannah is presented as barren. Barrenness was accounted a great disgrace for a Hebrew woman (Guthrie & Motyer 1979:287). According to the social relations of the family, Peninnah capitalised on the barrenness of Hannah, and she furthermore severely irritated Hannah. As a result, Hannah suffered from two problems: her barrenness and the conduct of Peninnah. The family is given as a God-fearing family who visited Shiloh yearly to worship and sacrifice. After sacrifice, the family was supposed to rejoice and celebrate the restored fellowship with God, by way of eating portions of meat from the sacrificial animal. But Hannah was far from happy, because Peninnah regularly chose this moment to score points over Hannah (Baldwin 1988:52; Guthrie & Motyer 1970:287).

The narrator tries to break this theme of tension between the wives by mentioning that Elkanah loved Hannah (v.5). In his expression of love for Hannah Elkanah makes the statement: "Am I not more to you than ten sons?" (v 8), But Baldwin (1988:52) says that this saying was not very unique to Elkanah, because it belonged to the current idiom of the time. This is evident in the way it is used in Ruth 4:15. Elkanah's statement could also add to the cause of hatred, in the sense that Peninnah could have noticed that she was not loved and, therefore, planned to trouble Hannah as a result of her jealousy.

Further in (vv 4-5) Peninnah is described as Elkanah's "wife". This social relational term is not used about Hannah. Peninnah could have been called wife because she was able to fulfil her childbearing role. Hannah is not called wife because she was not able to fulfil this role (Eslinger 1985:71). In response to this we find that the social relational term used between Hannah and Elkanah was that Elkanah was "her husband" (v 8, 18). Later, when Hannah is about to conceive (v. 19), she is referred to as the wife of Elkanah, maybe suggesting that she was now going to bear a child and thus fulfil her role as (mother) wife.

The effect of the bad social relationships between the two wives was that Hannah "wept and could not eat" (v. 7-11). This sentence is expressive of the deep sorrow that existed inside Hannah. However, there could also have been other reasons for crying:

- that she felt bad having to share the affections of her husband with Peninnah;
- she could have cried because she wanted to receive more attention from her husband;
- she may not have eaten, because she was depressed (grudged heart: Deut. 15:10);
- did not eat may also have been for the purpose of fasting in preparation for prayer.

It seems from the narrator's point of view that the irritable acts of Peninnah worked as a driving force that created emotions in Hannah that she also wanted to have a child. The spirit behind seems to have been that of competition in having children. It is in this spirit that the reader of the text is taken into the next scene of the narrative, where Hannah prays.

2.4.6.1 Concept of Honour and Shame in the Family of Elkannah

On examining the social and cultural context, there is also the issue of honour and shame as a social code that governs the literary readings of this narrative. Honour and shame were part of the dominant cultural values of the Israelites

2.4.6.1.a. Honour

There is an expression of honour in the behaviour of Hannah. Hannah honoured her husband's words of comfort when she ate and drank before she went to pray (v. 9) (Eslinger 1985:76). This was an honour, because the eating did not change her feelings about her barrenness. Elkanah and Hannah performed another act of honour. To begin with, Elkanah honoured his wife's vow and together they honoured the Lord by going to sacrifice to the Lord. Honour of God and that of people of high office was part of the order of the day. Culture held that a woman should honour her husband at all times and this is fulfilled in Hannah's honour of Elkanah.

The priests were also held in great respect and honour, both in social and religious spheres. Hence in the given text of Hannah, the priestly office of Eli is honoured when Hannah calls herself a servant of Eli (v. 16). This honour was in accordance with the religious codes of the time. Also religious codes of purity held that Yahweh was the only God of Israel, who

should be honoured by everybody. This is re-emphasised in the song of Hannah. She mentions that "no-one is greater than Yahweh" and that "the Lord is a rock" (2:2).

The Lord was understood to be in control of both religion and politics. Yahweh was Lord, judge and the one responsible for kings (1 Sam 2:10). Honour in the period of Israel was given and taken through religious patterns of life.

2.4.6.1.b. Shame

Shame was a dominant feature on the part of women, especially barren women. They were regarded without honour. Shame was upon Hannah when she received her threefold torments. Whenever Peninnah tormented her, Hannah did not answer. The taunts reduced Hannah to tears. In addition, Elkanah's interrogative model of comfort is intrusive, and carries with it the temptation to answer. Instead, Hannah gets onto her feet and onto her knees (Fokkelman 1993:30-31). It would seem that what made Hannah fail to answer was the shame that was bestowed on her by culture as regards barren women.

On several occasions, Hannah calls herself woman, and servant. In Jewish context a woman was regarded with low esteem, especially when she was barren. This is evidenced by the priest's misjudgment that he quickly belittles Hannah, mistaking her praying lips as a sign of drunkenness. Hannah's husband Elkanah trivialises her anguish with his uncomprehending questions, to which she does not respond (v. 8). Also her rival Peninnah belittles Hannah because of her barrenness (Cook 1999:16). Cook (1999:19) also adds that the woman in Ezra's vision calls herself a "handmaid" and considers her barren situation as a low estate (2

Esd:9:44-45). It would seem in the case of Hannah that she was conscious of the compromising situation of barrenness in which she found herself.

This is also expressed in her response to Eli's misjudgement. Hannah was submissive and she pleads with the priest not to see her negatively. The length of Hannah's response (v. 15-16) and the content and language used expresses someone who is trying to subordinate herself and express her need in a convincing manner. Hannah had interpreted Eli's rebuke as making her a renegade woman (Eslinger 1985:79). As a Jewish woman, it was right of her to be sensitive to the rebuke. Her first word, "no" (v. 14), is meant to remove completely the wrong perception of the priest.

The word servant could have meant that Hannah was a servant of God, in the context of a worshipper of God. It could also have been used as an analogy of Samuel as a servant of Yahweh.

The situation described above is quite similar to the situation of the barren women among the Karanga, since they too feel rejected and mocked by the community. In the case of a polygamous family, the other woman who has children will taunt the barren woman in that context. Karanga barren women experience inward bad feeling caused by both the community and especially by the immediate family members of the husband. They are regarded as witches in some cases. In most case, the poor of the community are the ones who experience the gravity of barrenness more painfully. More of this will be explored in chapter three where I make a Karanga-related reading of 1 Samuel 1:1-2:10.

2.4.7 Social Setting of the Family of Elkanah.

Jobling (1998:141) describes the family as "a story of plain country folk". Words are used such as "simple", "ordinary", "humble," and expressions like "simple sincere country wife". This makes Jobling (1998:141) share the assumption with Alter that Elkanah and his family were farmers. He goes further and adds that most Israelites were farmers. The text also emphasises that the family was from "the hill country of Ephraim" (v. 1). One could imagine that this was a family of poor peasant farmers who lived a decent life and could afford food. Their social status could afford them possibilities to sacrifice without fail. They could afford going to Shiloh every year. The family was united insofar as the religious aspect was concerned. They could afford to walk together as a family, and worship together. Only when it came to celebration time where they had to eat and drink, did the two women have an opportunity to fight.

Klein (1983:8-9) says that drinking as a social culture, was a form of celebration for the reunion in the relation to Yahweh that was observed after sacrificing. This was connected with various religious festivals in Israel (Judg 9:27; 21:20-21; Isa 28:7). Therefore, at Shiloh or at any cultic centre, drunkenness must have been a common feature of the day. It was a result of the expression of happiness in the Lord. Similar family sacrifices are reported in Samuel's home city (1 Sam 9:12).

The social context of the said author of the text of Hannah was that of the period when Israel had no king. Eslinger (1985:44) suggests that in order to understand the context of the author, one needs to ask: "What happened when Israel's government changed from theocracy

to monarchy?" An attempt to answer this question becomes part of the definition of the narrative.

Fokkelman gives a background description that explains time and space in the context of the narrative of Hannah. By doing so, he explores what had happened in the history of the judges as it is recorded in the Book of Judges. He cites three chapters of journeying Judges 17-19 (1993:4-5)

"In 17 a Levite leaves Judah, departing from Bethlehem of all places, the city where David was to be born, and makes for the Hills of Ephraim.

In 19, this route is travelled in both directions. This time a Levite resident of Ephraim goes South, to bring back his secondary wife from Bethlehem. After allowing himself to be thoroughly spoiled, he leaves with his wife and servant, at an unusual and unsuitable hour for the return journey.

...

Discussion between master and servant as to whether to choose Jerusalem or Gibeah/Ramah.

These places stand for Jebusite versus Israelite shelter; evil versus good.

Due to the Levite's appeal to the tribes of Israel, the Gibeon atrocity escalates into a national assembly issue and becomes the catalyst of a veritable civil war, which in turn increases moral chaos.

... Judg 19 terms ... offers the ethics of "good and evil".

The city of Gibeah/Ramah ... according to Samuel is to become the birth and residence of the first king of Israel. ... The place is in the hills of Ephraim.

The setting of the stories of 18-19 condenses the moral chaos into the formula that "there was no king in those days" to maintain law and order ..., "everyone did as he pleased"

This to me would seem a good summary of the context of the author of Samuel. He seems to be one writing a narrative or poem that was to be used to introduce kingship stories in the writing of the history of Israel. The 1 Sam 1-2:10 narrative-poem seems a latter insertion of

the final editor of the Deuteronomistic historian who wanted to forge a story that would neatly blend the period of the judges to the period of kingship. This work is done with the blending in of Yahweh as the Controller of events and the Master of all leadership in Israel. The stories evolve around Yahweh and, therefore, suggest the Deuteronomist historian as the author. This is clear in the study of the following texture of the text of 1 Samuel 1:1-2:10.

2.5 Ideological Texture

This texture seeks to examine the social, cultural and individual location and perspectives of writers and readers. While the inner texture concerns the words, phrases and clauses of the text itself, ideological texture concerns the biases, opinions, preferences and stereotypes of a particular writer and a particular reader (Robbins 1996:95). Ideology is the interpretation that is meant to show the power of Yahweh.

From the context discussed under social and cultural texture, it would seem that the function of the books of Samuel is to direct attention to the beginning of the monarchy (Guthrie & Motyer 1970:204). The questions that arise from this are: who does this work and what were the ideologies of the author? In what way did these ideologies influence the writing and the shaping of the text?

It is almost certain that the books of Samuel were part of a bigger historical work (Joshua – Judges – Samuel – Kings). If this were the case, the final editing of the books would not have taken place before the Exile, since the books of Kings carry the story down to that period (6th century BC). Further to this, Polzin (1989:18) attributes the authorship of 1 and 2 Samuel to the Deuteronomist who produced the final form of the books. In his writing, the

Deuteronomistic historian expresses his theological concerns (Guthrie & Motyer 1970:284; Polzin 1989:18). The question that we may ask at this stage is, who is the Deuteronomistic historian, and what was his ideology?

The Deuteronomistic history was a school of scribes working in the Southern Kingdom, during the 8th to the 5th century. They were influenced especially by the theology of the book of Deuteronomy (Deut 6). This theology was mainly based on the obedience of God and that if one does not obey, God would punish the transgressor. This school was responsible for the revision of the Pentateuch and for several successive additions (Deist 1984:44). A more detailed the ideology of the Deuteronomistic school and is explained further in the following sub- heading.

The story of Samuel contains within its texture threads of the ideologies of the Deuteronomistic history. The narrator's voice in the text does not only convey what the characters say, but also what they think and vow inwardly. The voice of the narrator and its accents contain a unified ideology of variety of voices and viewpoints (Polzin 1989:19). These voices are contained in the exposition of the narrator before each character gives his/her viewpoint. The narrator controls and determines the different scenes by way of introducing the characters and their contexts before they speak.

The narrator gives first the context of a habitual behaviour of family worship. Then secondly, he shifts to a context of prayer. Finally, he takes the reader back to the habitual behaviour of family worship in form of a sacrifice that climaxes in a hymn or prayer of thanksgiving. Throughout this entire scenario, there is a clear influence of the ideologies of the Deuteronomistic history.

2.5.1 What are the Ideologies of the Deuteronomistic History?

McCarter (1998:14-15) says Deuteronomism was a style of theology that drew its major teachings from the Book of Deuteronomy. Some of its central teachings were:

- stress on the centralisation of worship in Jerusalem;
- stress on obedience to Deuteronomic Law, and the avoidance of apostasy according to rigid reward and punishment ;
- stress on the worship of Yahweh as the only God, and that Yahweh punishes those who do not obey him.

In view of the above, the story of the birth of Samuel comes as the reply of Yahweh to the people's demand for a king. The birth story is an insertion to introduce Yahweh's serving acts in the history of Israel. In so doing, a servant of Yahweh had to be born, one who was to work as a Nazarite and through him, God gave the people the King they asked for. The editor of the stories of Samuel had to incorporate the birth narratives and use them in the Deuteronomistic theology of a God who controls nature, who rules, who gives, who judges and who gives the kings power to rule.

At the time the twelve tribes of Israel had been divided and given each their land to stay, they all identified a common need for "a king to rule over them" as a united group of Israel. Their reason for this was "to be like other nations". The context was that this would bind them as a nation and also help to unite them in times of war against other nations.

The author uses the style of duplicate accounts in his writing, for example:

1 Sam 1 Judges 13 birth narratives

1 Sam 2	2 Sam 22	Songs
1 Sam 24	1 Sam 26	David spares Saul
1 Sam 2:31-36	1 Sam 3:11-14	Fall of House of Eli
1 Sam 13	1 Sam 15	rejection of Saul
1 Sam 16:17-22	1 Sam 17:55ff	David is introduced to Saul's court
1 Sam 21	1 Sam 27	David flees

(Guthrie & Motyer 1970:285)

The purpose of these doublets where we find one story written twice is found in the purpose of the author. It could be that the repetition of similar events was a way of emphasising the ideology of the author. The author of (1 Sam 1:1-2:10) seems to score the point that the birth of Samuel as a Nazarite was not an accident. The divine hand is seen at work. In addition, it is in the ideological culture of the Old Testament that important figures had to be born in a mysterious way (Gen. 17 – Isaac's birth, see Cook 1999:18). Joan Cook makes a clear record of how God remembered different women in the Old Testament context and the important tasks that the "born sons had to take" (1999:18-19).

Polzin further makes an account of the divine intervention and divine causality in the 1 Samuel 1:1-2:10 narrative and poetry. This divine intervention is an ideology of the author who tries to show that Samuel came to be as a cause and intervention of God. "God closed the womb", "God remembers" (v.6, 19). The ideology of power of God and that of the priest is also experienced in the text.

God had power to give and take. The priest Eli also has power to "bless" (v.17). The form of the power of Eli is in his office of priesthood. This was a God-ordained office. God himself is believed to work through the blessing of the priest. "Go in peace; the God of Israel grant the petition you have made." The agent of power to grant the petition is God.

In the hymn of Hannah, the ideology of the power of God is expressed.

This is made evident by the following phrases:

- v. 2 no rock like our God
- v. 4 bows of mighty are broken
- v. 6 kills and brings to life
- v. 7 brings low and also exalts
- v. 8 lifts the needy
- v. 9 guard the feet
- v.10 judge the ends; give strength to kings.

God's power is expressed in political governmental terms. God is compared to a rock, meaning that his power is all-powerful and cannot be broken. The Lord is a governor and judge of all human situations. He is the one who gives strength or controls kingship. All this is the bias of the Deuteronomist historian.

In addition to this Polzin (1989:30) says the song displays a high degree of artistic composition with language heightened to serve key aesthetic and ideological purposes of the Deuteronomist.

Prior to this Polzin had made a literary comparison of the birth narrative to the context of Israel. In his study of ideology, he identifies also the conflicting situation in the story. He uses them to explain the situation of Israel during the time when they had no King.

Stage One: Background of family

Two wives, Peninnah had children and Hannah had no children; Peninnah was an enemy of Hannah. The two wives resemble Israel and her enemies. The enemies had kings and Israel did not. The narrator depicts Hannah's barrenness as caused by God. It would seem that the fact that Israel had no king was a result of God.

Stage Two:

Hannah is pushed by vexation and shame and she asks for a child.

Israel is pushed by political war situation and need for unity that they ask for a king "like other nations" (1 Sam. 8:5)

Stage Three:

Hanna was granted a son through the blessing of the priest Eli.

Israel was granted a King (Saul) through the prophecy of Samuel.

At this stage, Polzin (1989:27) also identifies a conflicting situation. The priest mistakes Hannah as being drunk. The issue of misunderstanding and drunkenness comes in as if to suggest that the kingship was a mistake, or it could suggest the conflict between the divine will and the evil powers. In my opinion this could be meant to express that human life both in Israelite history and in our own lives, is met with a varying degree of conflicts of the good and the bad.

Stage Four:

A child is born and is time to sacrifice. The discussion of Elkanah and Hannah about going to sacrifice, and Hannah chooses to remain behind. Polzin (1989:26) also identifies it as a delay in the coming of the king. At this stage, Elkanah leaves the decision for "Yahweh to establish his word."

This identification of conflicts in the ideology as done by Polzin may also reveal the shortfalls of the Deuteronomic historian. On the other hand, it could be one of the ways in which the author wished to show the intervention of God, that God intervenes at a given space in time.

However, one would want to conclude this texture by acknowledging that the author of 1 Samuel 1:1-2:10 blended the ideology of Deuteronomistic historian in his writing. This leaves the reader with no choice but to read the text as a theological record and not classic history.

2.6 Sacred Texture

This texture is found through seeking the divine in a text. This is achieved systematically by observing the presence and functions of the Deity, Holy Person, Spirit Being, Divine History, Human Redemption, Human Commitment, Religious Community and Ethics. These aspects of a text are found embedded deeply in the inner texture, intertexture, social and cultural texture, and ideological texture of a text (Robbins 1996:130).

2.6.1 Deity

It seems from the narrative of Hannah that this is a story where a writer is grappling with the problem of Theodicy. The context of the Deuteronomistic historian at the time of writing this story was that the Jews were in exile, suffering and questioning whether God was going to be just with them, since they had sinned and whether they were going to find salvation and be freed from exile. On the other hand the priestly family at Shiloh had corrupted the cultic place. There was need for a religious reform, an introduction of a new priesthood and a new life after exile. This is answered in the birth of Samuel as a new priest, who comes to correct the corrupt tendencies of the house of Eli.

The story is given in a narrative of a barren woman who yearns for a child and she grapples with the theology of theodicy. She suffers in the expectation of the justness of God. The transformation of Hannah from barrenness to fertility comes as an example of God's power on behalf of the marginalised. The answer to Hannah's request shows God's power and mercy. Hannah is an obedient woman who gains the favour of God. The question arose: how could someone in exile identify with Hannah and have hope for a better future? The Deuteronomistic historian grappled with the answer to this question in order to address to the current problems of the Jews. The sacred texture of this text contributes to the answer of this question.

The number of references to God by name, either as "Lord" Yahweh or God of Israel or Most High occurred thirty-seven times in 1 Samuel 1:1-2:10. God is referred to as One who acts, but He does not speak.

In verse 5, we are told for the first time that God "closed Hannah's womb". This negative action of God is mentioned again in verse 6 of the same narrative. God's nature here is to allow Hannah to suffer the problem of barrenness. We read that Hannah wept and could not eat because of the taunts that she received from Peninnah because of the barrenness. The question that we may raise at this stage is: why did Yahweh close her womb? Present day theologians, like the feminists, may see this as an act of violence against women (Bailey 1995:318). I would not take this to be violence against woman, a view that I consider too extreme. The most probably position of this act of God is that which is found in the discovery of ideological texture, that the closing of the womb was in fact in God's design to prepare for the birth of an important figure.

Cook (1999:21-22) talks about the Divine Causality in the Barren Mother stories. She recounts the stories of Old Testament barren women and tries to show that God was responsible for the cause of barrenness and for bringing fertility at last. This is contained in the stories of Sarah (Gen 17-18), Rachel (Gen 30) and Hannah (1 Sam 1).

Also on the same note, Bergen (1996:66) says that Hannah's infertility was not an accident of nature. It was the deliberate work of the Lord. What is interesting about all these views from different scholars who affirm the divine causality regarding Hannah's sterility, is that one stops to wonder why God could suddenly think of an action that would oppose his command. At creation (Gen 1:28) commanded the procreation of human beings. The same God is found here in the narrative and in other texts, stopping fertility. Could this be the intention of God or of the author? Could it be that the author had forgotten about the command to "multiply and subdue the earth", since it had long been uttered by God? These are some of the questions that are raised by the act of God to "close the womb". Surely, there could be other

ways that the author could have used to tell the story of a mysterious birth, without bringing in the concept of barrenness. It could be in the design of God that he makes people suffer before he helps them, so that they can realise his power.

As one reads the narrative of Hannah, one hears the presence of Yahweh, which is silently crafted into the story in a very skilful manner. Yahweh hears and remembers (v.19). To "remember" becomes a silent act of Yahweh that he uses to give the gift of a son. This is an omniscient attribute of Yahweh. The word "remember" is also used in a fertility context when Rachel, the barren woman, conceived (Gen 30). In addition, "Yahweh of Hosts" was the object of Elkanah's worship (v.3).

This is the first mention of this divine title in the Bible, and it is the first of five references in 1 Samuel (Klein 1983:7). Klein suggests the meaning of this title, saying that it might mean "He who creates [heavenly] armies" or might be referring to "Yahweh the Almighty" (1983:7). Taking it in the same sense as Klein, "Lord of hosts" could mean that the Lord ruled over heavenly hosts, or that the Lord worked with the assistance of some heavenly hosts. Hannah also addressed God as a "Lord of hosts", v.11. The hosts referred to could mean the Angels. This sense is taken from the angelic hosts who appeared in the birth narrative of Isaac (Gen 17) and that of Samson (Judg 13). The angels are associated with conveying fertility messages in the context of Hannah.

Also in the song of Hannah, the nature of God is described as follows (NRSV):

v.2	a rock	he is strong
v.6	brings life and death	refers to him as creator, father
v.7	sends poverty, wealth; exalts, humbles	refers to Him as rich
v.8	foundation of earth are his; sets the world	he is Creator
v.9	wicked are silenced guard the feet of saints	conqueror protector
v.10	opponents will be shattered will thunder will judge will give strength to kings	he is judge, one who governs even the kings

The Lord of the prayer of Hannah is omniscient, omnipotent, all-powerful and creator of all things including the earth. This texture teaches the reader that the Lord is all knowing and powerful.

2.6.2 Holy Person

The text introduces Eli as a holy person. He is named a priest together with his two sons Hophni and Phinehas. The priest has the power to bless and he evokes a blessing of fertility on Hannah, which becomes fulfilled. This power makes Eli a holy person. The divine power in Eli works through him.

I would like, at this stage, to change the order of Robbins' scheme (1996:126-127). I would want first to find the texture of the **religious community**, and then that of the **human commitment** and lastly **human redemption**. The reason for my order is that a discussion on

the religious community would help us see how community influences the lives of families and individuals who live in them.

2.6.3 The religious community of Israel during the context of Hannah was governed by the codes of religion stipulated in the Book of Deuteronomy. People were supposed to worship and to sacrifice to Yahweh. Sacrifice was to be done at cultic centres. According to the Torah, every Israelite was to make a journey to Israel's central Yahwistic worship centre (Deut 12:507). Elkanah takes his whole family annually for these religious traditional worship practices. By taking his family, Elkanah demonstrates his quality as a good family leader, as opposed to Eli, who failed his sons (Bergen 1996:65).

2.6.4 Human Commitment

Shiloh was quite some distance from Ramah, so for a family to walk there showed some determination and religious commitment.

The climax of family worship was expressed by a meal shared after sacrificing. This was done as a way of celebration for the renewal of a relationship with God or for the forgiveness of sin. At the sacrifice, the individuals were supposed to present offerings in the form of burnt, grain, freewill, and drink offerings as well as offerings of well-being (Num 19:39). Portions of meat from the sacrificial animal were eaten but meat was a rare diet of the Israelites. Elkanah is found concerned to share it accordingly to his family. The family was supposed to eat together as a sign of togetherness in worship. This did not succeed,, because the narrator tells us that Hannah could not eat because of vexation from Peninnah.

The family took up their due responsibility to go on their yearly pilgrimage to worship and pay the vow. This family of Elkanah was very dedicated to worship.

His commitment is shown by his zeal for accomplishing the annual journey with his family. The second expression of commitment is found in his keenness to pay the vow. Thirdly, his commitment is expressed by his unquestioning of the vow of his wife, although he had some leeway to do so. Fourthly, Elkanah is committed to give his son to the Lord, just like Abraham with Isaac, Manoah with Samson, and Jephthah, with his daughter.

Commitment is also found in Hannah as a person. Hannah is presented as a woman of faith. This could have been because of her infertility. The narrator presents her as one who joined her husband yearly to sacrifice at Shiloh. In the process, he was able to identify her source of help and used it (Cook 1999:35). Hannah made a "vow" during her decisive visit to the shrine (v.9). Her vow announces her determination in spite of Peninnah's taunts and Elkanah's lack of understanding, and in spite of Eli's inability to see (Cook 1999:35). Added to this, Hannah makes a commitment to fulfil her vow. During the time of the ceremony of dedication of the child, when Hannah was fulfilling her vow, she makes a long speech that reiterates the history of her experiences of barrenness, and she ends by saying "Therefore I have lent him" (v.28). The speech shows a sign of one who was grateful. The last statement shows one who was honest before God.

2.6.5 Human Redemption

The narrator also makes the reader of the song of Hannah experience Hannah's inner feeling and conceptions about the Lord. Hannah feels that the Lord is one who made her victorious over her enemies. The Lord of Hannah gives her joy and fertility. This Lord is all-powerful and he is the creator and judge of all. According to Hannah, there is nothing greater than the Lord. She felt this way about God because she found an answer to her infertility in God, which she had failed to find elsewhere.

Hannah also found in the Lord redemption, love and security from enemies. Her sadness was no longer. Her inner feelings of hurt, sorrow, anger, were removed. Her heart felt redeemed, from the bondage of barrenness. She was free from the bad perceptions of people around her. And from the bad culture of barrenness. She felt delivered from Peninnah's taunts. This is why she started her song of thanksgiving by mentioning the feeling of exaltation and joy. Hannah flew high in the spirit of deliverance. The question that we may ask at this point, is, could the barrenness of Hannah be described as the curse or punishment from which she feels relieved?

2.6.6 Summary of the Sacred Texture,

One can easily see that (1 Sam. 1:1-2:10) God is omnipresent in the text. Human beings depend on him. The religious and social ethics of the characters in the text are all in the light of the presence of God. The text begins and ends with human activities about God. The characters in the text did not have a life that was independent from God.

2.7 Summary of Chapter 2

In this chapter, I applied social rhetorical criticism as an exegetical method to the text of 1 Samuel 1:1-2:10. This study of different textures of the text was meant to help in opening up the possibility of a Karanga reading of the text of Hannah, which is meant to look at fertility and barrenness as blessing and curse. A study of the different textures helped to see beyond the written text. The following conclusions were reached:

2.7.1 Inner Texture

Inner texture has helped me to identify that this story is a narrative. The major characters identified in the narrative are the Lord, Eli, Elkanah, Hannah, Peninah, son or children. It seems that the Lord, Hannah and son or children are the central characters of the story. Their names are repeated from the beginning of the text to the end verses. The narrator of the story introduces the characters as they play their part in the narrative. There are also topics that have been repeated, and these are prayer, sacrifice, worship and barrenness. The topics of prayer and barrenness appear much more frequently than other. This suggests that they were key activities in the narrative. Repetition makes prayer and barrenness the central themes of the story. The theme of barrenness is repeated both in its negative and positive “having children” and not “having children”. Hannah is portrayed as barren in the beginning of the narrative. Later towards the end of the narrative, the narrator tells us that, “the Lord remembered her.” The movement from a negative situation of barrenness to a positive situation is expressed also by the use of repletion of negatives such as “no” and “not”. The situation of the family of Elkanah is introduced in negative terms, like “no children, not eating”. Later, the negative changed to positive “eating and drinking, having children”.

The inner texture helped to identify the progression of themes in the story. The story starts with the theme of the family, then it moves on to show the conflict in the family that was caused by barrenness. The conflict in the family creates a stage for the prayer of Hannah in which she asks for a child. The prayer continues with a vow as a means of assurance to an answer. The result of the prayer is a blessing of a child. The last stage is the paying of the vow which is fulfilled by the hymn of thanksgiving in which she expresses her feelings and beliefs about Yahweh.

The drama in the text contains narration. There is a narrator and actors. This kind of presentation makes the text a narrative. Hannah emerges as the heroine of the story, especially because she is the one actor who is found right through the text. She is also the one who acts in the major themes. She prays, she vows, and she sacrifices. Prayer is given as part of the life of Hannah. She is said to have poured out her heart to God. The answer of the prayer makes Hannah realise the power of God.

In the last stage of the narrative, Hannah sings a song of thanksgiving in which she expresses who God is and what God can do for her and for other people.

2.7.2 Intertexture

Intertexture helped me to see how the text of Hannah relates to other similar texts that preceded or succeeded it. I considered the concept of fertility and barrenness in the Ancient Near East and Israel. The conclusion was that barrenness was also a cause for concern in the Ancient Near Eastern world. In the history of Israel there are numerous barren stories that are mentioned Sarah (Gen 11), Rebecca (Gen 25), Rachel (Gen 29) and Samson's mother (Judges 13). In all these stories on barrenness God intervenes and blesses the barren women.

However, there was a more noticeable similarity in the story of the birth of Samson in Judges 13, to that of Samuel in 1 Samuel 1. The similarities of these stories suggest that there is one author who reconfigures the birth of Samson to make it a new story. Some of the major similarities are the introduction, “there was a certain man”, “the vow of a Nazarite,” and the context of barrenness. Again in both cases the families went to sacrifice after the birth of the child. The possibility could consequently be that the stories emanated from the same author who is the Deuteronomistic historian, or that the stories came from another unknown source.

There was also a great deal of similarity between to the song of Hannah in 1 Samuel 2:1-10, and the song of David in 2 Samuel 22. A suggestion about the similarities is that it could be the work of one author (the Deuteronomistic historian) who purposely used the former story to foreshadow the later, or that the stories were meant to express the same ideology (Polzin 1989:26-34). Both the hymns sing about victory over a situation. Hannah sings about her victory in the power of God that she is given a child. David’s victory was in war. The song of Hannah includes themes of Israel’s national culture, such as defeat, enemies, battle and creation. Fertility and child birth are included as equally important motifs for Israel’s singers (Klein 2000:91) which indicates that the songs maintained the same themes or ideology, although Hannah includes in her song the motif of fertility.

The writer of the books of Samuel opens with the birth story in which a woman is moved from the situation of the shame of barrenness to the blessing of having a child. The woman sings a song of victory that she has been served from shame. She acknowledges that her salvation came through the power of God (Birch 1998:977). At the end of the book, (2 Samuel 22) the writer introduces the story of the victory of David. He sings a song that

expresses his victory and he also acknowledges that God helped him. One would say that the writer of the books of Samuel starts and ends with stories that reveal the power of God.

The discovery, therefore, was that the stories of the birth of Samuel do not stand alone, but that they were influenced by other stories that came before and quite probably from the same author. This texture helped me to see that there had to be a social and cultural background within which the writer was formulating this narrative and hymn. A study of the social and cultural texture became necessary at this point.

2.7.4 Social and Cultural Texture.

This texture helped to understand the social roles and institutions in the text. First we are introduced to the social role of priesthood. Eli and his son are given as Priests at Shiloh. These Elide priests were, however, corrupt in their behaviour. So the priesthood of the Elide family was declining. In this case there was room for God to introduce yet another priest who would take over from the Elide family. Eli as a priest performed his priestly duties for Hannah. He blessed her and Hannah had a child. The priest is seen performing a role on behalf of God. The act of blessing other human beings was not for Priests in the history of Israel. It had always been the work of God. The second social role is that of Nazarite. Samuel was designated a special man set aside for the work of God through the vow of his mother.

We read also about social institutions. Shiloh is given as the place of the house of the Lord; the ark of the Lord was also at Shiloh. The Elide priests worked there. The family of Elikannah went to sacrifice at Shiloh every year. Later in the text we are told that Samuel

started his work at Shiloh. The presence of the ark of the Lord at Shiloh made Shiloh a place of inquiry about the Lord.

The family of Elkanah is given as another social institution in the text. The major concerns about this family were its social relations. Elkanah had two wives. Whereas Hannah had no children, Penninah did have children. Polygamy was at the time tolerated under the Law of Moses (Deut 21:15-17). In the history of Israel polygamy was common among kings. This polygamy could have been caused by political and economic factors, but for other people in the history of Israel, polygamy was caused by barrenness. One would like to presuppose that judging by the situation in the text, this polygamous family could have come about because of barrenness.

The barren wife Hannah suffered taunts from the fertile wife Peninnah. In their context, barrenness was a great disgrace. Hannah suffered from being barren and also from the mockery from Penninah and as a result, Hannah was always sad. Her sadness troubled her husband who sought out ways to make her happy. The concept of honour and shame surrounded the life of Hannah. Together Elkanah and Hannah honoured God. They fulfilled the vow of Hannah. The culture of Israel was that of honouring God and the people in high office. Hannah also spoke with humbleness to the priest Eli when she was dedicating her son. She called herself a servant of Eli.

Shame was also one of the factors that Hannah had to live with. She carried the shame of barrenness as a stigma in her life. She felt lonely and troubled by her barrenness. The other wife of Elkanah did not regard Hannah as having any human value. However, shame played also a positive role in Hannah's life. The shame of barrenness pushed her to pray and she

received the honour of a fertility blessing. It would seem that Hannah was cursed in her situation of the shame of barrenness. She does not mention the curse, neither does she accuse God for closing her womb, but the reader of the story hears this suffering that surrounds her as an act of cursing. That she gives birth to a child in the end represents a powerful movement from a cursed position to blessedness. The text tells us that she was blessed, although it does not tell us that she was cursed.

2.7.5 Sacred Texture

This texture helped to understand the religious life and beliefs of the people in the text. It also indicated how God intervenes in human life. The reflections made in the New Interpreter's Bible (1990), shows that the books of Samuel begin with a salvation story and that new life emerges from barrenness and hope from hopelessness. Despair is also transfigured to thanksgiving. Hannah makes a claim of a new life that moves from barrenness to fertility (Birch 1998:977).

The history of God remembering his people is also found in the past. God remembered Rachel (Gen 30:22). He also remembered the Hebrews in bondage (Ex 2:24). In this instance God remembers Hannah. The act of God's remembrance changes one's situation from bad to good. Hannah opens her misery to God and asked God to remember her (Birch 1998:977).

Hannah uses prayer to change her life. She moves from the situation of prayer to sacrifice. Sacrifice and prayer are used as vehicles that changed the life of Hannah from barrenness to fertility and from curse to blessing. It is the power of God that gives Hannah victory. In this text God works through the marginalised, weak, rejected woman, and uses her as a vessel to

communicate his power to people. According to the Deuteronomistic historian, it would seem that the story of Hannah also points to the future of Israel. Samuel is born in the period when the Elide priests were failing in their work as priests. He is born as an example of God's power to renew the religious life at Shiloh. Samuel's birth comes not only as an answer to the plea of Hannah, but also as an answer to the problems of priesthood, namely the need for a king. The priestly family of Eli had been corrupted by the scandals of his sons 1 Samuel 2:12-14, and because of this the Israelites needed a new leader, a king like other nations. The Deuteronomistic uses the birth of Samuel to address these problems. The birth of Samuel and the interventions of God brings transformation to the barren situation of Hannah.

Another way of looking at the birth story of Samuel is that it seems that the Deuteronomistic historian was grappling with the problem of theodicy affecting the Jews in exile. So this story of a woman who struggles with the despair of barrenness and seeks to find help from God, could also refer to the hopeless situation of the Jews in exile. Hannah is pictured as an obedient woman who waits and listens to God. The message for the Jews in exile could have been that they are supposed to be obedient and wait for God to change their life situation. Because of the obedience of Hannah, God had mercy on her. It would also have meant to say that God's mercy comes only to the obedient children of God.

The meanings of names of the characters in the text suggest a sacred texture of the text. Hannah named her son Samuel which means "*asked of from the Lord*". The "EL" God, suggests one who came from God (Klein L R 2000:90). Hannah means "*gracious*" (Fokkelman 1993:17). This name is suggestive of the grace of the Lord that she was going to receive at the end of her suffering. The child came as answer for Hannah's request, and this answer was the grace of God.

In the following chapter I turn to a contemporary view. It relates a Karanga woman's reading of the story. In this chapter, Karanga cultural perspectives of barrenness will be discussed in the light of the story of Hannah. A dialogue of the text and the Karanga cultural concepts on barrenness will also be explored.

CHAPTER THREE

KARANGA WOMENS' RESPONSES TO BARRENNESS AND FERTILITY AND THEIR READING OF 1 SAMUEL 1-2:10

3.1 Introduction

In my experience of working as a pastor in the church, I have had the opportunity to share in and listen to the pain and suffering of women who are perceived barren and those who have been medically proved barren. The empirical research that I carried out added to my knowledge of what is going on in the world of the barren. It is in this chapter and through this dissertation that I would like to communicate the experiences of barren women, and use the text of 1 Samuel 1:1 - 2:10 as an informative and formative text in the process of addressing these experiences.

One should also acknowledge that the problem of barrenness does not only affect the Karanga women in Zimbabwe. It is a problem of many women of different cultures. I merely used the Karanga women as a typical example to discuss the problem. I have been exposed through my work as a pastor to women of other cultures, such as the rest of the Shona speaking people, of whom the Karanga is a part, and the Ndebele people who constitute another large cultural group in Zimbabwe. My experience is that the problem of barrenness affects all women regardless of race or colour. It is my hope that this research will help not only the Karanga women, but also the rest of the women who will have an opportunity to use this research.

The research that I carried out was undertaken in Masvingo town in Zimbabwe. Its population at the time of the census in 2002 was estimated at 60 000 people. These were the latest official statistics that I was able to obtain. One would expect this number to have diminished since then because of the prevalent economic and health problems. A number of people have lost their lives through HIV and AIDS. Some have moved to their rural homes due to the country's economic problems that have left so many people without jobs, in order to continue with peasant farming.

My empirical methodology required sampling and I used two methods to identify my respondents. First I identified three locations of people, in their different social and economic status. The three suburbs were Rhodene, which is regarded as an area for the rich people. Then I went to Eastvale, which is the area of the middle class people. Last I visited Mucheke, which is an area for the poor people. My reason for choosing these three categories, for rich, middle class and poor, is described in the biographical section below. I walked the streets of each location, knocking on different doors and asking the women whether I could interview them. The second method that I used was that of asking pastors in Masvingo to help me identify barren women in their congregations and invite them for an interview with me. This second method was employed after I realised that, it was difficult to identify women who were willing to share about their barren status.

The research was conducted by using a questionnaire that I gave people to complete. The questionnaire was self managing, but in most cases I had to sit and interview people individually, reading the text with them and getting their feel on Hannah's experiences. I did this mostly with the barren and perceived barren women, and with the less educated and the

elderly women. In total I managed to interview a hundred women. Variable characteristics of these respondents are shown below in the biographical section.

Setbacks

I met with some setbacks in my research. These were mainly caused by the instability of the politics and economics that Zimbabwe is facing today. Because of the problems of the economy, politics which affects the lives of the people in Zimbabwe, there has also been a great deal of research that has been conducted by different groups and organisations in order to understand more about the lives of the people of Zimbabwe. As a result the society is now sensitive about people who do research. Some researchers have gone to the extent of paying the respondents, in such a way that respondents now expect to be paid. This creates many limitations in the field of research, because people are almost on the verge of selling information. As a result the amount of information given could also be relative to the amount of money paid by the researcher. The result is that very few people now volunteer their time and information for research purposes without expecting some form of remuneration.

Politics

In some cases some women refused to be interviewed, because they were either busy or that they mistook me for a political figure. There are presently a large number of political activists of the opposition party, which makes people be sensitive to any outsider who would like to enter into their homes to talk to them.

Economics

Some women refused to be interviewed, because they thought that I was from one of the NGOs, with the result that they wanted to be paid for supplying information. They would openly say to me: “You are sponsored for research, so give us money and we will give you the information”.

Social

Some possible interviewees would just refuse the interview, because they thought that barrenness is something disgraceful, which should be kept secret. This kind of thinking emanates from the Karanga culture, which teaches that all sexual related issues should be kept secret and personal. Talking about barrenness among the Karanga is considered talking about a uterus, which is supposed to be a private part of a woman that is owned by her husband. It was, therefore, difficult to make the barren women talk openly. Sex and sexual related matters are very shameful to talk about. As a result, women are expected not to share their sexual concerns, and if they do, it is considered tantamount to going naked in public. An expression for this in Karanga is, “*kuzvifumura*”, to open up secrets or “*kuzvifukura hapwa*,” literally explained as raising up one’s arm- pits and make one’s smells known. Such sayings make women to close up on sexual discussions.

The other setback was that some women – especially those who are not barren – were simply too lazy to complete the whole questionnaire. They thought that it was not their problem. They did not see the need to do so, because the problem of barrenness does not affect them directly.

However, there were also some positive aspects, which helped me to succeed in finding women who were willing to share their experiences and thoughts with me.

- My being a muKaranga woman helped me to be able to create a line of dialogue.
- Being able to speak the Karanga language also was of great importance in terms of interviewing the people and also to translate what the women had to say.
- Knowing also the culture of the people was a great advantage.
- In addition, my family experience of having ordeals of barren brothers and sisters from both my own family and husband's family was helpful, because I was able to interpret some of the behaviour that I observed. These family members always shared what they were experiencing everyday.
- Besides, I work in a church that has barren families. These families shared with me their experiences and feelings. One male member of my church shared his experience that his wife deserted him because of barrenness. Close sharing with people contributed to the success of this research.

The following is a report and discussion of my research findings. As a way of reporting, I would like to suggest that I follow the order of the questions as they appear in the questionnaire. This will help me to include all the responses that I received. I will also add my comments as I report on the responses.

3.2 Theme—1—

Biographical data

3.2.1. Age

Under 20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51 +
2	11	23	46	18

I managed to interview women of different ages. It was difficult to reach women under 20 years, because most of them were not married, and they did not find the interview worth their while. Most of them returned my questionnaire uncompleted and informed me that the matter concerns the married women. In the end I managed to interview only two. The major percentage of women whom I interviewed, were in the age group of 31-50 years. I also discovered that the majority of women who have experienced barren problems were in this age group. Those in the earlier age still had some hope for fertility, so that even if they were currently experiencing this problem, they would not have realised or regarded it as a serious problem.

I also managed to interview women of 50 years and above. These women enriched my research with a great deal of cultural information, which the young women did not have.

3.2.2 Marital status

Single	Married	Divorced	Widowed
2	75	13	10

About 98% of the people I interviewed were either married or had experienced marriage one way or the other and only 2% had never married. The rest of the single people with whom I made an attempt to talk refused to complete the questionnaire. They felt that this was not their problem.

The number of women who claimed to be married or to have been married in the past was quite shocking. It would seem that even those who had just been pregnant and subsequently abandoned wished to claim to have belonged to a marriage. It seemed for me that, knowing my culture, every woman would want to say that she has been married or is married; because knowing one's fertility status would mean having had sex with a man. So if one had had sex, it would appear as if one would be a prostitute if one did not affiliate oneself with a marriage. So all the interviewees wanted to say that they are married, even those women with no known husband responded in this fashion to avoid the stigma of prostitution. This was also a psychological way of making oneself comfortable in the interview.

3.2.3 Fertility

Barren	Perceived barren	Fertile	Unknown
8	9	80	3

About 80% were fertile women, 8% were barren, and 9% were perceived barren, while 3% did not know their status because they were not tested. Those who are perceived barren shared that they married and discovered that they could not conceive, and the blame was merely put on them without having been tested. They just suffer under the traditional belief that women are the ones who are barren and that this problem does not affect men.

3.2.4. Church / Religious affiliation

African Initiated Churches	Protestant	Catholic	Pentecostal	African Traditional Religion
10	55	8	25	2

In terms of religion, it was difficult to come across those who declared themselves non-Christians, because most women in Zimbabwe nowadays want to be affiliated with a church of some kind, or some religious group, because of the socio-economic pressures. Also health problems caused by the pandemic disease of HIV and Aids, which kills so many people, is causing a great deal of pressure on people. Churches are seen as sources of help and a place where one could go and release the pressure, of unsolved problems. In Masvingo most people are Protestant, Catholic, or Pentecostal. The Pentecostal churches – also known as the charismatic movement – is growing very rapidly in Zimbabwe in general. However, the main line churches had done great missionary work, in such a way that most people were baptised, although they do not necessarily go to church. Some of these baptised people are the ones who would join the new mushrooming churches. The African Initiated Churches are also growing very fast. The reason why they gain members so rapidly is because of their prophetic aspect. People want to go to these churches in order to receive some prophecy about their

future and also to get healing prayers. Leaders of these churches claim that they are able to prophecy and heal people, with the result that they manage to win people to their sects.

I also managed to come across women who were non-Christians. They claimed to believe in the power of their ancestral spirits. These women confessed that they believe in the existence of God, but they also believe in the power of their ancestral spirits.

It is always the case with most Africans in Zimbabwe. They find it difficult to leave their African beliefs totally so they live a life of double standards. I discovered this in my work as a pastor, that although people would come to church, they also privately worship their family spirits and appease them. The Africans believe in practical visible things. So for the issue of religion, most Africans can be Christians but they would always remain with some degree of belief in the ancestral power. As a result, when things go wrong for them they also turn to their ancestors for help, as much as they would turn to God.

3.2.5. Level of education

None	Primary	Secondary	Technical College	University
7	6	30	45	12

In Zimbabwe the level of literacy is currently at 85%. The majority of the people I came across could read and write, with 88% of them being able to understand some degree of English. The literacy level improved in Zimbabwe because after independence primary education was free, and the government also built many secondary schools in the rural areas. The school fees were reduced significantly such that it became affordable for all to go to

school. As a result a good number of the young people in Zimbabwe have gone to school up to form four, although they may not have passed this grade. Most of those who have gone up to form four are unemployed, because of the high rate of unemployment in the country.

3.2.6. Economic status

Poor [<i>cannot afford regular meals</i>]	Middle-class [<i>can afford regular meals</i>]	Rich [<i>can afford more than just regular meals</i>]
27	60	13

In the towns of Zimbabwe people are normally settled according to their social and economic settings. They have areas for the rich, the middle class and the poor. Since the economic situation of the country today is so bad, most people belong to the middle and the poor class. These are people who can afford regular meals, whereas the poor may sometimes have only one meal a day. Because of the economic problem, there are very few people who are rich and most people can merely afford nothing more than regular meals.⁴

3.2.7 Occupation

Unemployed	Self-employed	In private Sector	Civil service
6	50	20	24

⁴ These statistics reflect perceptions and are not reality in my view as a Zimbabwean. The present situation on the ground in Zimbabwe is that most people are poor. They can hardly afford regular meals. The economic state of the country is very bad and the rate of inflation is very high. There is a general shortage of basic commodities such as soap, meal-meal, sugar, and fuel. But the statistics in the interview do not reveal this situation. In my view this could be ascribed to people who may be afraid to speak the truth, or that they are say their own situation is one of being poor. The people who regard themselves as middle class, are in reality just as poor. The most likely position is that there are two classes of people, namely the rich and the poor. But for the purpose of this dissertation, I will follow the statistics as given.

Most of the women whom I interviewed are employed, but it would seem from the results that there are a good number of those who are also self-employed. The women who are self-employed are in the ages 31-50 years. These women are of a mixed background in terms of education and economic status. Some of them have been employed before and they believe that doing things on their own is much better. Others have never been employed because of the high rate of unemployment in Zimbabwe. Poverty pushes them to do something for their children so as to survive. The economic problems of the country have managed to force most people in Zimbabwe to be enterprising and create jobs for themselves.

Women who are self-employed shared that they are faring much better than working for somebody, because they are responsible for how they spend their time and this gives them sufficient time for their family. They also stated that self-employment gives them self-esteem, and it enables them to avoid the male abuse that they would normally suffer at work.

3.3. Theme—2—

Karanga cultural understanding of Fertility and Barrenness

8 Who comprises a family in Karanga culture? <i>Chinonzi mhuri pachikaranga ndivanani?</i>

All the respondents answered this question. There were two different categories of answers to this question. One definition was that of a nucleus family. About 26% of the women I interviewed defined family in nucleus terms. The women who defined family as a nucleus are predominantly of high education and they also belong to the rich and the middle class. It would appear that the highly educated people have a different understanding of what constitutes a family. They describe family as father, mother, and children. Their reason for this description could be economically founded. This description limits the family resources to just the immediate members of the family.

Among them were some of the barren women. These barren women understand family in more restricted nucleus terms, which narrows it down to just “father and mother”. One could say that their context of not having children makes them describe family as husband and wife. They do not want to include children in this group, because they do not have any and neither do they wish to include relatives, because of the taunts that come from relatives with regard to their barrenness. So for them family merely involves the two persons who are married. The majority of the women described family as extended, to include all the relatives. About 74% of the women of mixed biography held this idea. This definition is more in line with the general Karanga traditional understanding of family, namely that a family includes all relatives.

M L Daneel, (1971:46) who wrote about the Shona people in Zimbabwe, of whom the Karanga are a part, described family *mhuri*, as that which includes any combination of relatives, such as a man , his wife, children, together with maternal, uterine and affinal kin, who share experiences of birth, marriage, and illness of each of its members. The same definition is held by Karanga people regardless of whether one is educated or not.

In addition Nyatsanza (1998:195) discusses the concept of family among the Shona people of Zimbabwe and says that the Karanga people are part of the Shona people. Shona is the bigger tribe that includes different dialects and cultures, and Karanga is one of the dialects of Shona. He says the Shona, like all Africans, are born into an intertwining web of relationship within nuclear and extended families, which form the basis of an individual identity. The concept of *mhuri* among the Shona is manifested in working together (*humwe*), playing together (for children: *mahumbwe*), fetching water and firewood (for women) and hunting together (for men). This communal life is held together even in polygamous marriages.

The respondents also described extended family as “father, mother, children and all the relatives”. This definition is more inclusive, in such a way that family becomes a big circle of relatives.

It is interesting to note at this point that in the two definitions given by the respondents, children were mentioned as core members of a family. In Karanga there is a saying: “*pasina vana hapana mhuri*” meaning where there are no children there is no family. This would eventually mean that husband and wife alone cannot make a family.

A 61 year old woman shared that “there is a difference between a family and a marriage. Two people can be married and still not make a family, a family includes children.” She further explained that husband and wife make a couple and are referred to as husband “*murume*” and wife “*mukadzi*” and not as family until they have children”. One can also read the same definition of family in Genesis 12:1-5. Abraham and Sarah are mentioned by their names from the time of call and are sometimes referred to as husband and wife until the family had a child.

In addition it is my understanding as a Karanga that for the Karanga people family refers to a marriage that has children. “*Chinonzi mhuri vana*” or: “what is called family are children.” This suggests that in Karanga culture a marriage with no children does not qualify to be called “*mhuri*”, family.

9 Is marriage important in your culture? Why? *Kuwanana tingati kwakakosha here pa tsika yenyu? Nemhaka yei?*

I managed to receive 91% responses to this question. About 9% decided not to respond. This 9% is constituted by two single women, while the rest are divorced. It would seem that they do not place any value on marriage or that they merely did not wish to respond.

It would seem from the responses that I obtained that 74% of the women agreed that marriage was important for setting up family institutions that help in people’s lives in different ways. All these are married women, and it could be that they see marriage as a positive institution because they live a married life. The other 17% women – mostly the divorced and a few young married women – did not think that marriage was important. The divorced could have been expressing some of their bad experiences of marriage. The young women who shared

the same sentiments with the divorced could be experiencing the first years of marriage and be going through the teething period of their marriage.

However, it would seem that the majority of the women who responded thought that marriage was a good thing. These women went further to give different reasons for marrying and those for getting married. The reasons were given variably as follows.

3.3.1 Reasons for getting married are:

- That one builds her own home (74%). To build a home also means to have a family. The women who said this are of mixed age and social status.
 - That a woman can also fulfil her feminine duties, including that of bearing children (69%). The women who held this view were of mixed age and status and they are married.
 - That she can be a source of wealth to her family when she gets bride price (*roora*) (13%). This number was constituted by mainly the old women who hold to cultural traditions. Most women did not give this reason because African women are becoming more and more anti-*roora*, since they regard it as a source of abuse by their husbands, and also that they feel that it is one way of being sold to a man.
- From my own experience, as a Karanga woman ,when a girl is growing up, she is encouraged and groomed in preparation for marriage. The preparation includes the expectation that one will be a mother. The family will be looking forward to receiving a (*roora*). A girl child is regarded as an investment, a source of wealth to

her family. The belief is that if a girl does not marry it would be thought that she has an evil spirit (*shavi*), that denies man “*shavi rokuramba varume*”.

In Karanga there are expressions used to refer to getting married or marrying. To be married is expressed as leaving the bedroom that one uses as a girl: “*kubuda munhanga*.”

One respondent shared an experience that emphasises the above cultural phenomenon. She said that there was a man who once killed a ten year old girl in a car accident, when the girls were returning from school. The man was made to pay the equivalent of US\$2 000 for this little girl. The reason was that the family of the girl felt that their daughter was going to be married in future and they were to receive this amount for the bride price (*roora*).

3.3.2 Reasons for marrying are:

- It is the order of the nature and the will of God that one must be married (74%). This was the response by married women of different age groups and also of varying economic and educational status.
- People marry in order to have a sexual partner (18%). This came from the young women of 21-40 years. These women are still young and active in sex, so they value the need for a sexual partner.
- That they build a home and start a family (65%). This reason came from a mixed group both in terms of age and social status, but they are all married.
- To have children and make the family or clan grow. In Shona they say “*kuwana kukudza, nokuwandisa rudzi*.” Marriage makes a clan grow (49%). The women who said this are in the age group of 40-50 + years old. These are mature women who value family and life. They are all married.

The expression for marrying in Karanga is “*kubuda mugota.*” *Gota* is the boy’s bedroom. The bedroom for married people is called “*dare*”. People who sleep in a “*dare*” are expected to end up having children. As a result, in Karanga culture there are rituals performed for a woman to enter a “*dare*”. It is a bedroom given to a woman when she gets married. It is given specially by the husband’s sisters for the reason of procreation. Failure to procreate would mean problems for the woman.

Therefore, when a Karanga man marries, the anticipation of the man’s family is that he will have children. These children are expected to be mostly sons. The reason for a male child will be discussed in the responses later in the dissertation. In order to show that the Karanga value child bearing in their marriages, a man does not pay a part of (*roora*) called *danga* (a herd of six to eight cattle) until his wife bears children. This is a custom among the Karanga. A married woman has to bear children first before the husband pays the last and largest part of (*roora*) called “*danga*”. For those women who fail to bear children, *danga* is not paid and the in-laws consequently lose out.

10	<p>Polygamy is one of the family traditions which is common among the Karanga people. What are the causes for it? <i>Nzanga ndeimwe yemhuri dzinowanikwa pa vaKaranga. Ndezvipi zvikonzero zvokuita nzanga?</i></p>
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Only 67% of the respondents answered this question. The remaining 33% simply did not respond. These are the young women of 20-30 years. They also include a few of the age 31-40 years. The reason why they did not respond could be that in their time and age, people do not practice polygamy as in the past where a man could officially marry more than one wife.

One respondent said that “it is only the uncivilised people in the rural areas who still have polygamous marriages, but these are very few”. However, 35% of the respondents in the age

31-40 and 41-50 years shared that in an urban setting like Masvingo, women co-habit with a married man in order for them to obtain financial assistance. They said that this was considered common law common-law marriages.

The other 32% said that there still are a few legal polygamous families and some of them are Christians. Most of these Christian polygamous families are members of the African Initiated Churches. In these churches, polygamy is encouraged, as it is taken as Biblical, using examples of the Old Testament families that were polygamous. There are also some polygamous families in the mainline churches.

Among the women I interviewed, some 16% shared that they come from polygamous families. Some shared that they are happily married and that they respect each other in their marriages as Christians. One woman shared that “she is the second wife, and she was married because the first wife could not bear children.” She described her marriage as a happy marriage. The other woman said “She is the first wife. The husband just decided to marry a second wife. They all have children. They always fight. The husband makes them share the same bedroom on the same bed. She said that they are now used to it and that they do not care.”

In general the women who responded seem to agree that polygamy is no longer as common as it was in the past. These days people do not enter as frequently as in the past into public polygamy because of economic factors, which include failure to maintain more than one wife, and a fear of HIV and Aids.

One woman of 71+ years who is among the respondents to this question, stated that the reasons that were given to justify polygamy in the old days were many. Some of them were:

- For having enough labour force in the fields.
- A man would feel important by having many wives. Having many wives was a sign of being a real man, "*murume chaiye*."

She further shared that the circumstances in which these women were married were different. Girls were given to man by their fathers in exchange of crops in the event of starvation. My own grandmother was a victim of this situation. The rich men of the time – such as chiefs, headmen and witch doctors (*n'anga*) – used to have many wives because they were popular and had enough cattle to pay to the bride price (*roora*). In some situations when the first wife got older, she would ask her husband to marry another wife. This second wife would come to work for the first wife and also to entertain the husband sexually, as well as to bear children. Having many children establishes a sense of importance. Barrenness was also another cause of polygamy in the history of the Karanga.

A common reply by the women was that one of the causes of polygamy these days is barrenness. In a barren family the husband is usually tempted to marry another wife. This is done as a way of trying to solve the problem of barrenness.

One barren woman shared that: "As I continued in my marriage, and failed to conceive, my husband's sisters and mother encouraged my husband to find another wife to bear children with, and now we are two wives to him." Another woman shared that she is married as a second wife, because the first wife was barren and "I was married because I could give my husband children and I am proud of it because my husband loves me."

The other causes of polygamous marriages vary from economic pressures, to sexual lust, and marital problems like barrenness. The interesting thing to note is that most women in these marriages live with a degree of stress. In most instances the second wives are proud of being married, because they believe that they are superior to their husband's first wife. Second wives hold the view that, "for a man to marry me as a second wife means that he sees something in me that his first wife does not have".

"Long ago", said one 81 year-old woman, "polygamy was good and common among the Karanga. One man could have up to ten wives." I can also personally acknowledge her word, because my grandfather had 10 wives and 33 children. But this practice is a thing of the past.

11 Is barrenness a threatening problem to a family? <i>Ko tingati kushaya mbereko idambudziko rinonetsa kumhuri herei?</i>
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It seems that all the respondents replied to this question. I received two types of answers to this question. About 94% of the respondents, mostly the poor and the middle class, mentioned that barrenness constitutes a major marriage and life threatening problem. A few rich women, however, thought that barrenness is not a problem. These women constituted 6% of the total number of respondents to this question. Their ages vary. Their reason for saying this could be that they are too rich to think wider than their personal lives or to see the need for having children because they may regard their money as the answer to all their problems. Riches could be seen as solving all human problems and giving a person comfort .

The rest of the respondents were all of the opinion that when Karanga men marry, a wife is called "*mukadzi*", "*mukadzi wa John*" "John's wife". Karanga language implies that a woman sexually belongs to her husband. The term "*mukadzi*" wife is formed from "*nhukadzi*,"

womanhood which constitute the reproductive organs of a woman. The reproductive organs of a married woman are believed to belong to his husband. One old woman said: “a woman without a uterus is not a woman, “*igaba*,” she is like an empty tin”. This is an expression of the old standing tradition that our ancestors taught our parents to believe.

According to the Karanga, the whole reproductive system of a woman makes her to be dignified as a woman. Therefore, barrenness can cause a woman to be shamed in her society. The feelings that were shared emphasised the previous quote that barrenness among the Karanga is equivalent to nakedness. A barren woman is like a naked woman, in the sense that she is not respected and she is treated like dirt in her family. One barren woman said: “In the family that I am married, I am made to go and herd cattle with children. No one respects me. No one consults me for family plans. I get very few visitors in my house. People in the family find it easy to send me around to do chores”.

The respondents held a strong view in general that “in Karanga society, barrenness is associated with women”. The barren women expressed that they went through a great deal of pain and stress, which is inflicted upon them by the husband’s relatives. Experiences of divorce and death were shared by most respondents. Stories of women who died as a result of being barren were narrated.

Some women commit suicide, and others contract HIV and Aids in the process of trying to have a baby. Because of family pressure the husband may be advised to look for another woman with whom to bear children, or in some cases the wife may also try another man outside marriage. In this process, the danger of contracting HIV is very high. My own sister

died this way. She could not conceive and the husband went out to look for another woman and in the process, he contracted HIV, which he passed on to her and she eventually died.

It is also my understanding that for the Karanga, the husband first has to consent to issues of family planning methods, such as the removing of a uterus. The sexual organs of a married woman are the property of her husband and family at large. "This is why a barren woman suffers some abuse from the family of the husband when she fails to conceive."

12 What causes barrenness? <i>Ndezvipi zvikonzero zvokushaya mbereko?</i>
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This question received responses from all respondents. Each woman gave two or three of the reasons that are discussed below.

Diseases.

About 66% of the women thought that barrenness is caused by diseases. The social status and ages of these respondents vary. One of the old women whom I interviewed had a lot to say about diseases that cause barrenness. This woman is called a "*nyamukuta*" in Karanga. Her job is to help other women to manage their pregnancies and to help them deliver. In other words, she runs what is called a traditional antenatal clinic. Society calls such women "*mbuya nyamukuta*" and she uses herbs to do her work.

She shared in detail about a disease called "*dzwanga, jeko*" that causes barrenness. This woman said, "*dzwanga*," "*jeko*" is a disease that affects fertility. This "*jeko*" is referred in clinical terms as period pains. She said that "*jeko*" appears in two types. There is a lighter one, called "*jeko re gadzi*". This one is feminine, less painful and less harmful. The other

one is “*jeko rerume*, and is more painful, harmful and is the one that causes barrenness if it does not get treated. This type is also difficult to treat, but it can be treated in its earliest stage.

Secondly she talked about a disease known as “*Gohona*” This disease can affect either men or women. “*Gohona*” refers to a worm that presents itself as a vein and is found between the vagina and the anus in women. In man, it presents itself between the testicles and the anus. She said that a person with “*Gohona*” will never bear any children. This problem can, however, also be treated. Medical doctors have a medical term for it, but she could not remember this term. I did not engage in any further search for this, because this was beyond the scope of this dissertation. She said that the doctors as well as the African traditionalists perform a small operation and remove this worm, being one of the causes of barrenness. This vein is merely cut, and the person is able to reproduce. The African traditionalist “*nyamukuta*” also does the same, by taking a razor, cutting this vein, pulling it out and then throw it away. Then the person becomes fertile.

Family Planning

Only 13% of the uneducated poor people shared about family planning methods as the cause of barrenness. They said that if a person uses methods like the pill before one bears children, one is bound to weaken the blood and then this results in barrenness. This could be from a lack of knowledge about family planning methods. Again, as I mentioned before, it was not in the scope of this research for me to ascertain more details. I would, therefore, suggest further research about the side-effects of family planning medicine and how this is

understood by the less educated. This research could simultaneously also analyse the biblical understanding of family planning.

Medical

A medical cause was mentioned by most of the educated women and about 24% of all respondents mentioned this cause. It could also be that educated people are more liberated from traditional beliefs and that they understand human biology much better. Among them was one medical doctor whom I interviewed, and also some 15 nurses.

They mentioned some medical reasons for failure to have children. Especially the doctor gave a more detailed response, which is as follows.

- it could be because of the man who has low a sperm count, or because of some lumps that are known as fibroids. These lumps can be numerous in and outside the uterus. In some cases, there could be one or two big ones and can grow and fill the uterus. In this case, they can expand the uterus and present false pregnancy. Later on, they break and cause bleeding. Fibroids are very bad because they can make a woman develop false hope, which can be psychologically damaging.
- Another medical problem that causes barrenness could be that of having blocked tubes. A woman with tubes that are blocked cannot have children. She has to have the doctor operate her so that she can have children.

- Many other medical conditions can cause barrenness. In addition to this the medical professionals mentioned that any deformity that has to do with the reproductive system of a human being is able to cause barrenness.
- There are women with weak uteruses that can not hold pregnancies. These women continue to have miscarriages and they add to the number of barren women.

All these medical conditions were discussed as part of the diseases that cause barrenness. The rest of the respondents were not very detailed.

Witchcraft

Of the women that I interviewed, 87% raised witchcraft as a cause of barrenness. These women are of mixed biography. It would seem from the number of responses that I got, most women think that barrenness is caused by witchcraft. Reference to witchcraft is a common phenomenon among the Karanga. This bewitching can be a manifestation of hatred or jealousy. Witchcraft is a way of fixing another person, using ghosts, medicine, and other means of secretive sorcery. Hatred and jealousy are generally described as witchcraft. Karanga believe that people bewitch each other as a way of venting off their anger. As a result one can be witched to become barren.

Among the barren women whom I interviewed, one of them shared that the cause for her barrenness was natural and that it was God's will. As a result she said that "I think that this is the will of God and one day by his grace I will have a child". The rest of the barren women shared strongly that they were bewitched. Some shared that the cause of the witchcraft was jealousy for their progress. They accused members of their families and some accused their

mother in law for bewitching them. One woman was of the opinion that "it is my mother in law who bewitched me, because she did not want me to be married to her son." Another barren woman shared that "I was bewitched by my own relatives because they were jealousy of my rich husband."

This reminds me of an experience that took place in our church. A certain girl was disobedient to her mother. She and the mother hated each other such that, when the girl got married, the mother refused to be involved. The girl also did not care. The mother swore that she had bewitched her daughter not to have children in her marriage, because she did not respect her. The girl married and stayed for five years with no child in the marriage. She later went and apologised to her mother. The mother forgave her and she conceived and had a baby. Witchcraft is a common phenomenon among the Karanga.

Although witchcraft is a common phenomenon among the Karanga, women are not comfortable to discuss it in detail because of fear of accusing others, as it is against the law in Zimbabwe. It is difficult to talk about witchcraft without accusing others.

Evil Spirits

Another cause of barrenness that emerged from the interviews was that of having an evil spirit. This was raised by 29% of the respondents. Barren women and those perceived barren are mostly the ones who shared that they are accused by their husbands' relatives for having an evil spirit, "*shavi*," that causes them not to have children. These women shared their experiences that they are regarded as people who have evil spirits. Most of these women who gave this reason are members of the African Initiated Church. They hold strongly the issue of

evil spirits because this is the common prophecy that is prevalent in their churches. Barren women go to these churches to receive exorcism of the evil spirit. It is also a general African belief that every bad thing is interpreted in the form of an evil spirit.

One woman who is barren disclosed that "when she is sleeping with her husband, the spirit possesses her and she starts to push her husband out of the bed. The spirit will speak through her and say, 'do not marry me, for I am not a woman'. She continued to say that the spirit will possess her for the whole night, such that the husband can not touch her or have any sex with her."

Another woman said that "I have the spirit of witchcraft that I inherited from my grandmother and this spirit does not allow me to get married or to have children. This is why I divorced."

It is devastating to hear what women go through something that they can not control. To my knowledge, these spirits are said to be in two types:

- Spirit of witchcraft "*shavi rouroyi*". This type of an evil spirit is believed to eat the eggs of a woman in her womb so that she cannot have children.
- The other one is called uncle's spirit "*shavi rasekuru*". This type is believed to causes barrenness in a woman, because she will be having a male evil spirit. In order for such women to have children, these evil spirits have to be exorcised. This exorcism is done by traditional healers, or others have it done at their churches. Women from the African Initiated Churches shared much on this process of

exorcism. Some of these evil spirits are believed to be stubborn and they refuse to go away, as a result of which the woman remains barren for the rest of her life.

Natural Causes

There are also other respondents who shared that barrenness can be directly caused by God. There were only a few women who had this idea, namely about 15% of all the respondents. These women are of the ages 21-40 years. They are educated and they share very strong faith in God. It could be that they have so much faith in God that they see things independent of culture. One of the women who shared this feeling is barren. She said “that as a barren woman she strongly believe that her barrenness is of natural cause and as a result she hopes that the same God will take it away one day and bless her with a child”. This woman has a very strong faith, and she belongs to the Pentecostal churches.

Promiscuity and abortion

Reference to the above came mostly from married women. It was shared by 32% of the respondents. They shared that some women indulge in business sex (prostitution). These women are tempted to perform many illegal abortions and in the end they damage their reproductive organs. It could be that the married women who have committed themselves to marriage would want to denounce any form of prostitution.

One of the respondents related a story that she witnessed: “A young girl in their village had an illegal abortion and it was not complete. She did not report this until she fell ill. Later she was taken to hospital and they found out that her uterus had to be removed

because it was badly infected. Later this girl got married and she did not tell her husband that she has no uterus. The family has problems of not having children, but the wife is quiet about the matter”.

13. How do people perceive barren women in Karanga society? *Ko maKaranga vanoti chinyi kana vachiona mukadzi asingabereki?*

This question was responded to by 92% of the respondents. The other 8% did not respond. Those who did not respond are from the ages 20-31 years and some are single. The 92% who responded, mentioned that barren women are regarded with shame in their communities. A barren woman is regarded as a worthless woman.

Responses from elderly women were in more detail concerning Karanga perceptions of barrenness. Two elderly women sat with me and they started to give the Karanga concept of mother, *mai*, as an introduction to their responses.

These elderly women shared with me what they thought *mai* means in Karanga. They shared that to be mother *mai*, one has to have children. Children qualify a woman to be a mother in the society. In the event that one fails to have a child, then she cannot be regarded as a mother, but just a wife to somebody. The status of motherhood is the greatest challenge for a woman.

In Karanga two words are used to denote a woman. These are “*mai*,” mother and “*mukadzi*,” wife or woman. *Mai*, mother, points to one who bears children or one who has already borne a child or children. Hence a woman in the Karanga society is called after the name of her child or by the totem of her husband. For example “*mai Grace*” or “*mai Tafadzwa*.” *Mai* is

the word that addresses to the woman in respect of her status to breast-feed. Mother, "*mai*" is one who gives birth, cares, feeds or breast-feeds. Therefore a barren woman can not be referred to as *mai* according to the above definition.

The barren women that I interviewed expressed that, when a woman is barren or perceived barren among the Karanga society, she is looked down upon with shame. They expressed in common that people look down upon them; even other women. They feel as if they are outcasts. They feel rejected by the whole society and are without any respect, even by young children, in the community.

One barren respondent had this to share:

"I had to divorce because the family of my husband did not have respect for me. No one liked me. Even young children made fun of me. I was perceived as a witch. My husband did not want to have sex with me anymore. He expressed that having sex with a barren woman is very discouraging and is a waste of time, because the woman is fruitless".

Another barren woman also said that:

"when her husband saw that they could not have children he started tormenting her so that she could go back to her parent's home. The husband went to the extent of removing the door of the hut where this woman was sleeping. This was done in order to make the woman go away. Nobody in the home or in the surrounding society felt like helping out. They just left her alone sleeping in a hut that has no door. The explanation to this behaviour was that a barren woman is like a hut without a door. This was done to inflict shame on her."

Barrenness is a factor that causes shame and disgrace on a woman. The same feeling was expressed by all the barren women to whom I talked. A barren woman is left with no respect of her own and cannot identify herself with anything. In both cultures she is an afflicted person and is looked down upon without honour in the family and in society.

In my research among the Karanga I ascertained that a barren woman receives blame and taunts from members of her husband's family. The relatives of the husband could go as far as chasing her away. The barren woman experiences all conceivable forms of evil from fellow human beings.

In Karanga society these women are regarded as witches, or are seen as having evil spirits that eat their eggs before they have time to conceive. These women are lonely in their communities and in their homes. They have no one with whom to sit around the fire. In polygamous families the wife who has children, is always proud of her children. A barren woman has no one to help her do her chores at home and she has no one with whom she may eat. Her daily context is that of loneliness.

I remember one incident that happened in our village when we were growing up. There was a barren woman in our village who also had asthma. She lived alone in the village because her husband had gone to find a job in the city. In her life she could spend a day or two without talking to anybody and no one checked on her. Her barrenness made her have very few friends. One day she had an asthma attack in her house and she could not shout for her neighbours because of shortness of breath. Hence she died in her hut. Days later people started to wonder about her closed doors and whereabouts. They searched and found her dead. This is as bad as barrenness can be.

- 14 There are Karanga nouns that are commonly used in language, *Ngomwa* and *Ruware*. To whom and for what meaning are these terms used? Make a comment on each one of them. *Panamavara echikaranga anoti Ngomwa uye Ruware anogaro shandiswa mukutaura. Mavara awa anoreva vanhu vakadini uye anorevei? Dudzira rimwe nerimwe rawo.*

“Ngomwa”

This question received a response by 96% of all the respondents. The elderly women, in other words those above 51 + years, who constituted 18%, were keen to discuss these terms in detail because they felt that these terms are not properly used. The rest of the other women merely gave the common meanings of the words as they find them in day to day use. As a result 74% said that the daily use of the word “*ngomwa*” refers to barren women. Their answers were just one sentence. “*Ngomwa* refers to a barren woman.” About 4% did not respond to this question.

The elderly women shared that “*ngomwa*” does not refer to women in its original sense. Originally “*ngomwa*” was a man who is infertile. In Karanga the word “*ngomwa*” refers to a man who produces watery sperms or a weak sperm count. This is proved by a test that the adult men would perform on men who would be suspected infertile.

One witch doctor, a 71 year old woman, whom I interviewed shared that “long ago when boys were growing up, they would go for public swimming, or bath at the local rivers or pools found in the area. There, while they were swimming, the boys would ejaculate in the water. The result was, if the sperms remain surfacing on top of the water, then it means that one has low sperm count. If the sperms sink and do not remain on top, then it means that the person is fertile. The other test was that a man would be made to eat a raw egg and if the

person vomits, then he is considered infertile and would be called “*ngomwa*”. Unfortunately these tests could not be carried on women. Man was not forced to carry out this test. Women could only be proved barren when they fail to conceive. The whole blame is placed on the woman and eventually the term “*ngomwa*” came to refer to barren women in daily language”.

“*Ruware*”

This term refers to a barren woman. In the original sense of the two terms, “*ngomwa*” is supposed to refer to a barren man, and “*ruware*” to a barren woman. There are no specific terms for fertile man or woman. The terms “*ruware*” and “*ngomwa*” are supposed to inflict blame on the part of those who are barren.

“*Ruware*” refers to a woman who can hardly conceive. The same witch doctor whom I interviewed went on further to say:

“*Ruware* are those women who have some deformity on the vagina. These women are deformed such that the shape of the vagina does not allow the penis to enter properly. So the science behind is that the man will be ejaculating outside and the sperms die before they reach the womb. This deformed vagina is called ‘*ndufu*’ in Karanga”.

Fertility or infertility of women is a problem among the Karanga because when girls grow up, they are taught to keep their virginity until they get married. This makes it a problem for someone to be able to determine her fertility status before marriage.

15	Please comment on this proverb: “A dog can be regarded as old but a man remains fertile in his old age.” <i>Chembere ndeyembwa yomurume ndibaba vevana.</i>
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Only women of age 40 years and above could respond to idioms. The younger women could not respond, because they are no longer familiar with sayings in the Karanga language, because they use English expressions in most of their present day communication. But this makes the native people lose a lot from the riches of their language expressions. Karanga language has a lot of proverbs and idioms in its daily use, just like any other language. As a result, some proverbs are used to express the issues of fertility and barrenness. These proverbs and idioms are supposed to be used to teach about something as they are applied in communication.

This proverb assumes that all men remain fertile until death. The Karanga emphasise the issue of female menopause, while ignoring male impotency. The word “*chembere*” (old) refers to old women, and “*mudhara*” refers to old men. “*Chembere*” in Karanga language is used to inflict aging on women, while “*mudhara*” may even be used to refer to someone who is in his late forties, referring to one who is older or bigger than one who is speaking. Karanga language does not emphasise age on man. The understanding is that a man can continue to marry and mate, while a woman should count her age. This proverb overrides the problem of potency. This means that the formulation of such a proverb emanates from a cultural background that assumes that men are never too old to bear children. Only women are considered too old to have children.

16	A boyfriend does not own a child. What is the meaning of this idiom? <i>Gomba harina mwana. Dimikira iri rinorevei?</i>
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Again only women of ages 40 years and above attempted to respond to this question. The young women did not bother, and said that they did not know *idioms*. The term *Gomba* or *Chikomba* refers to a boyfriend. Any man who has sexual relations with a woman to whom he is not married, is called *Gomba* or *Chikomba*.

The idiom “*Gomba harina mwana*” is used in Karanga to refer to the problem of barrenness and fertility. This idiom is translated to say a boyfriend does not own a child. This idiom is used as a solution in situations where a couple fails to have children. The woman then goes out to look for a man to sleep with in order to have a child. If the woman manages to conceive, the child is said to belong to the man in the marriage. The responses to this idiom were that women are advised to make love with another man or with the brothers of their husbands in order to have children, and in this situation “*gomba harina mwana*”. It means that the woman should preferably try the brothers of her husband first, in order to try and maintain the same blood in the family. Consequently this idiom is used when people want to justify promiscuity, which is done as a solution for barrenness.

17 Do you think that parents prefer a son to a daughter when bearing children? Why? *Ko kuti vanhu vangada chaizvo kusarudza kuva nomwana mukomana kanamusikana here pakubereka? Nemhaka yei?*

According to the interviews I carried out, there were shared feelings as to whether a couple would prefer a boy or a girl child. This question was answered by all the respondents. The poor class women of ages 20-to 51 + years shared in common that it is better to have a boy than a girl. It could be that the poor expect to have their male children look after them when they grow up. The elderly women of 51 + years seem to be more concerned about death and inheritance of their property, since the girl child has to be married. These respondents amounted to 65% of the respondents. The other 35% responded that a child is a child, and it does not matter of which sex he or she is, the important thing is to have one. The women who constituted this group, comprise the educated, the rich and the barren. They did not seem to be choosy. One respondent from this group said that “what I want is a child, despite the

gender.” This kind of a choice is usually made out of desperation for a child, and is common with barren women or women who have children after a long struggle for fertility.

Another woman shared that long ago, generally people would prefer to have more sons than daughters. They had to be sons, because they believed that they would marry and add to the clan, by making it stronger. She further shared that the other reason for the preference for sons was that they would be given the name of their father. The idea of carrying on a name is that the person continues to be remembered when he dies.

It was echoed that a name is very important. The name of a person carries with it the spirit and the behaviour of a person. Therefore, when Karanga men die, his name is given over to his eldest son. The belief is that the father continues to live in the life of his son. Those who bear daughters only, will die, take their names with them and they are remembered no more.

Another response shared in favour of sons is that “besides the name, a son is believed to continue carrying out the father’s role in the family when his father dies. A ritual is carried out for the handover of responsibility to the first son when his father dies. The ritual is called ‘*Kupa tsvimbo*,’ meaning to hand over a knobkerrie”.

A knobkerrie is a weapon that is used to defend one from his enemies. Karanga culture holds that each man must have a knobkerrie as a sign of manhood and that of defence, as knobkerries were used during war in ancient times. A man is known for defending and for fending for his family. A knobkerrie is used also for hunting as one way for fending for the family. In order to show that a son has been handed over the responsibility of fending, for the family carrying and defending his father’s family when the father dies, he is given a

knobkerrie as a sign. Because of this, parents prefer to have at least one son or many sons. It is also general preference that most men prefer to have the first-born child being a son. This preference is for the purpose of inheritance. Karanga culture holds that sons are the ones who inherit wealth from their parents. Sons are to inherit cattle and other major moveable and immovable properties.

When a Karanga man has no son, he has no inheritor of property, and is known in Karanga as “*mudyarifa*,” namely one who inherits property. In English he would be said to be the heir of the property.

One of the respondents mentioned that “when a woman continues to bear children of the same gender, it becomes an issue of concern. As a result there are herbs that are given to that woman to take so as to change the gender of the next child. This process is called ‘*kushandura nyoka*’ to turn the uterus. Traditionally this is done at home also during the birth of a child. The traditional midwives observe the placenta ‘*ravakuru*,’ when it comes out. They let it drop on the floor and then they pick it up quickly and turn it over on the other side. This turning over of the placenta is believed to change the gender of the next child”. All this shows the concern of Karanga on the gender of a child.

My experience as a Karanga woman and pastor is that I have had to counsel many couples that were about to divorce because of failure to have male children. Many stories of such divorces have also been reported from outside the Karanga people, among the other African tribes in Zimbabwe.

About 27% of the respondents of the age of 30-50 years and of higher education further expressed that nowadays people do not seem to be bothered whether they have a son or a daughter. They point to the fact that the educated Karanga are now modernised to the extent that they do not seem to care much about the sex of the child. Accordingly modernists and traditionalists are now divided on this issue. The modern members of Karanga society do not seem to care. One respondent said that “these days we prefer daughters because they look for men and then they get money and help us in this economic hardships in Zimbabwe.” She further said in Karanga “*Vasikana vanochengeta hatidi kunyeperana*,” meaning to say, “girls take care of us as parents: make no mistake about it”.

Another respondent shared that long ago parents would not send a girl child to school at all. They felt that it was a waste of resources since the daughter would get married afterwards. So sending them to school was like promoting the family of the husband, where she would be married. She shared that this developed in a next stage where parents would send their girl children to school up to primary level and their formal education would then end there. The boys would go further with education, the belief being that boys were expected to take over responsibility for the family when the father became old or when he died. The current position is that most Karanga men are no longer selective when it comes to sending their children to school. With exceptions, however, there are still some who still prefer to send their sons for further education instead of girls in the event of economic recession. Those who do not seem to have any preference about the education for their sons or daughters, one would nevertheless find that they still express sentiments of a wish that sons should pass much better than daughters in school.

The Karanga expect sons to perform better in school and in everyday life settings as compared to daughters. They always say to their sons: "Do not be overcome by girls in life "*Usakundiwa navasikana*". "Show them that you are a man, be brave like a man and do not be coward like a woman", "*Chomurume chivindi chomukadzi ibapu*". All these sayings are uttered by parents when their children grow up, showing that, parents would preferably choose to have a son instead of a daughter.

Reasons for having Children

The women further gave reasons for having children in their responses. The reasons that they gave were varied as follows:

- For the purpose of helping with work in the home and in the fields (84%).
Most women seem to want children so that they can be helped with chores.
- To support parents in their old age especially in the case of a son (78%). Karanga women predominantly want male children so that they can take over the role of the father when they grow old.
- To keep one company (45%). Some people like children, so that they can have company at home.

It is very interesting to see how people vary in their reasons for having children.

Family size

The average number of children born in a Karanga family has in the past been six. However, the introduction of family planning in this modern age has resulted in reducing the number to three. But it is in my understanding that contraceptive methods are not encouraged among Karanga. One is supposed to bear children until one can bear no more, and this is what it means to be a real wife ("*mukadzi chaiye*").

The contributory factors to having many children were that most women married very early. The reasons for this early marriage were that some young girls were given to a man by their families during times of starvation as a means of acquiring food from the man, or in some cases as payment to avoid vengeful spirits "*ngozi*" Aschwanden (1987:129), who wrote much

about the Karanga defines “*ngozi*” as the avenging spirit of the dead which is used to cause misfortunes on others. This spirit is cast towards a family with whom one is fighting and it causes misfortunes and death. Usually, in the event that one has killed somebody, the spirit of the angry dead person is used to strike as *ngozi* and this is paid back using a girl child so that she can go and give birth to replace the person who would have been killed. In this event a young child of the age of four can be given to a man as a wife. She goes to grow up in the husband’s family and is made to indulge in sex at a tender age. Secondly, the other reason for giving a young girl for a marriage, was that of economic reasons during starvation. A girl would be given to a man so that family of the girl may get food from the son in law. This tradition has been there for centuries and is more active in the rural areas in times of starvation. My own grandmother married this way.

It was also very common that most women used to marry before twenty years old. Some other reasons for these early marriages were that women wanted to find security in a man, so they consented to marriage and sex when they were still very young.

Secondly, the history of tradition has it that parents would not require their girl children to continue further with school, with the result that the girls would find nothing to do and thus resort to marriage at an early age. This is common among the poor communities.

However, these times have changed and most people are now educated and they send all their children to school. The average age for marriage is now twenty five years. This is because most girls spend their time in school. Marrying later in life also reduces the number of children that one may have. But for the Karanga it is still most recommendable to have as many children, as possible.

18 What kind of a ritual is done in a family when a child is born? *Ndokupi kupira kunoitwa kana mwana achinge azvagwa ?*

This question was answered by 83% of the respondents. The other 17% of the age 20-31 years did not respond. The reason for not responding was not given. It could be in my view that these women were not aware of these rituals. Among those who responded, 9% stated that nothing was done except for the child to be taken to church for baptism. I would say that this kind of response is more akin to what a Christian would express who is pure in Christian ethics, but as a Karanga I know for sure that Karanga people do perform some rituals when a child is born. Some may perhaps do only minor things, but at least something is done in respect to the newly born child.

The same respondents added that they may in some cases hold a baby welcome party. This is where the women meet and pray thanking God for the child and then give the baby some gifts. This kind of response came from strong churchwomen who are not really otherwise engaged in cultural matters. Christianity has now eroded some of the traditional cultural norms. According to Christianity, some African rituals are sinful because they are done in the spirit of appeasing the ancestors.

The other 74% of the respondents held that there are some rituals that are performed when a child is born, regardless of whether the parents are Christians or not. This is done because of fear of death. As a result, the rituals are done to protect the child from the causes of death. One woman responded that the first ritual that is done on a child is called “*kurapira nhova*,” meaning to protect the fontanel. She shared that people are scared of the softness of the middle of the head so they believe that most diseases may enter through this part of the body.

In order to avoid this, they try to cover this part with some mixture of herbs that makes a layer to dry up the visibility of the softness. This idea was shared by most women.

Women also mentioned another ritual, called “*kusungira zango*.” This process involved taking the urine of a baboon, dry it, tie it in a small bundle and make a necklace for the baby. This necklace is called “*zango*” in Karanga. One respondent said that people use a baboon’s urine as medicine. The explanation for this belief is that a baboon is an animal which does not easily become ill. So if a child has this “*zango*,” the child will not easily be affected by disease. As a result it has become a common sight to see babies who have huge necklaces hanging around their necks until they are of the age of two years or more. When the fontanel of the child becomes hard the “*zango*” is removed.

In addition to *zango*, there is also the ritual of *kusungira mutimwi*, tying a string of wool or fibre around the waist of the child. *Mutimwi* is a string that is tied around the waist of the child. This is used as a symbol of binding the child with his or her ancestors. When the child grows, *mutimwi* is cut off. But in the case of a girl, the *mutimwi* is renewed at puberty and first menstruation. The girl is made to wear *mutimwi* forever in her life as a sign of adulthood (Aschwanden 1982:80-81)

Another ritual that emerged from the answers was that of giving the child to the family spirits. This was shared by the women older than 50 years. They strongly believe that the child should be given to the family spirits for protection. They also shared that they face problems with the teachings of Christianity in such a way that most young women of today refuse to have their children undergo this ritual. The view that most Christians hold now is that this ritual is replaced by baptism. The traditional Karanga who believe in ancestral spirits

believe that the child should be given to the ancestors, so that they will start protecting the child.

The traditional Karanga also value the umbilical cord of a child. They make sure that it is buried in the home where the father was born. In the event that the child is born in town, when the umbilical cord falls, they keep it and later take it to the father's village home and bury it there. This umbilical cord "*rukuvhute*," is used to connect one with his or her place of origin.

Home is important for the Karanga, because they value where their "*rukuvhute*" umbilical cord was buried. There is always a difference between home and house for the Karanga. The place where people live in town is called a house. The village family place is called a home. The word home is used in a deeper sense to refer to the place of origin. It is the place for burial, because when Karanga people die they prefer to be buried at home so that they sleep together with other dead members of the family. This is also done so that the spirit can join the other family spirits. Thus home is very important and religious for the Karanga. Home binds the family spiritually and it gives identity to a person. It is therefore incumbent upon a Karanga man to have a village home. One can have a huge house in town, but without a home one is a disgrace among the Karanga. It is as if one has no identity and one has no decent place to be buried eventually.

Birth Rites

As part of the rituals, the respondents also introduced the issue of birth rites in their answers. About 58% of the respondents referred to the issue of birth rites. They felt that first all the rituals that are done to a newly born child are the responsibilities of a mother. As a result they

identified some of the birth rites performed by the Karanga women, which are also found in the text. These are the naming rite, the weaning rite and the sacrificing rite.

Karanga culture holds that childbirth is the one possible area in which a woman can take the initiative to be in charge and decide what kind of a child she wants to have through teaching and child initiation rites, and also through refusing some of the suggestions of family that may not seem conducive to the child at that particular time. Through sharing, one of the Karanga women disclosed that she refused her daughter to be given the name of a dead grandmother, because she knew that the grandmother was a witch. She felt that her daughter would get a bad name.

Naming Rite

A study of the naming rite of the Karanga by Aschwanden (1982: 39) shows that when the Karanga give their children names, these names usually convey a meaning. The Karanga value the naming rite of a child. A child is named either after a member of a family who died or who is still alive. This could be because the parents admire or like the relevant person, or in the event of a dead member of a family, they may merely wish to revive the name of the dead. The belief behind it is that it is possible in most cases that the child would behave like the person after whom he or she is named. In the case of a girl child, if she is named after a grandmother or aunt who was a witch, it is believed that the child will take over the spirit of witchcraft. In summary: it is the general practice of the Karanga that children are given names of relatives.

Those who are Christians believe that these names are cleansed of the other person's misfortunes and behaviour through the ritual of baptism in the church. For those who do not go to church, the child carries with him or her the burden of another person's name.

Aschwanden (1982:39) also says about the Karanga that children are given names that express either evil or good, experiences and expectations of the parents. One respondent who is also a schoolteacher by profession shared on the implication of names. In her response she gave a list of the following names and their meanings and said that these names can have a bad or good implication on the child.

Name	Meaning
<i>Tapiwa</i>	Given
<i>Mufaro</i>	Happiness
<i>Tafadzwa</i>	We are happy
<i>Zvidozwashe</i>	God's will
<i>Takudzwa</i>	We have been exalted
<i>Rugare</i>	Peace
<i>Mazvita</i>	Thank you
<i>Muchaneta</i>	You will get tired
<i>Kufakunesu</i>	Death is with us
<i>Muchadura</i>	You will confess
<i>Takwana</i>	We are enough
<i>Tofirei</i>	Why do we die?
<i>Gwisai</i>	Fight back
<i>Tizai</i>	Run away

<i>Togarasei</i>	How do we stay / live?
<i>Takunda</i>	We have conquered
<i>Munyama</i>	Misfortune
<i>Dambudza</i>	Problem

These and other names are given to children as expressions of the inner feelings of the parents. A name like "*Dambudzo*" – "Problem" – may express the unhappy feelings in the marriage. But again, it is believed that the child may be a problem or experience problems in future. As a result, in order to cut off some of these cultural beliefs of the Karanga on naming a child, the priest has the prerogative to change the name of a child at baptism if he feels that the name carries with it some evil expression. This happens in the case of children who get the chance to be baptised. Some children would change their names when they grow up. The government of Zimbabwe has a legal facility for someone who is 18 years old to apply for a change of name. Women who responded to this agreed that it is not right for a woman to give her child a name that carries with it any bad connotations.

The name is believed to carry a magical connotation that it provides an indication of what could happen to the future of the child. Therefore the Karanga are careful when choosing the names for their children.

Weaning rite

On reading the text, the Karanga women also mentioned the importance of weaning a child. Older womens' responses reflected the culture of weaning a child in the history of the Karanga. They said that before a woman would wean a child, she would wait for the elderly

women of the family to tell her when to wean the child. The elderly women would look at the health of the child to tell that the child is fit for weaning. They would look whether the child has grown the first four milk teeth, and also at the age of the child. The mother of a child would then be told to wean her child. The process was that the grandmother of the child would take the child and keep him or her at her quarters as a way of removing the child from his or her mother. I remember that in my case when I was growing up, I was made to stay with my grandmother for five years until I was the age of going to school. This practice was meant to give the mother some rest from breast-feeding and a chance to conceive and bear another child. Grandmothers would work like chambers for weaning. In the event that there was no grandmother, the child was given to other grown-up women of the family, such as aunts.

Because of civilisation the Health Ministry in Zimbabwe currently emphasises child health, and weaning is to be done after one year six months as a rule. Some women breastfeed their children for up to two years. The cultural period of three years among the Israelites is informative that it is important and good to give a child good health. A mother in this case has the prerogative to wean her child at the time she wants. It is important in my view for women to realise their power over man when it comes to the issue of rearing children and that at least women can control the time they breast-feed and wean children. Women also are in control of the first language of a child and they are the first teachers of culture to a child. The prerogative of when, how to wean a child is given to the women.

It is also important to notice that men are happy when the children are weaned because the child is removed from the lap of his or her mother and also out of the bedroom of the parents. This leaves the man with a good opportunity with his wife.

Sacrificing rite

Through a reading of the text, the Karanga women identified themselves with Hannah in the sense that they are the ones who take children to church for baptism in most cases. In my experience also as a pastor, I have had women only who came to seek baptism for their children. The men do not seem to worry about it. The women do all the arrangements and the men are invited to the day of baptism. In this case it would not matter so much who officiates or baptises the child, but it matters who brings the child to the Lord. The text here informs and encourages the women in the church for their usual duties of bringing children to church. It is only on very rare occasions that Karanga men are concerned about bringing children to church. In the rural setting children are left at home herding cattle and goats while the parents go to church. Adults attend most church activities. It does not seem important to take children to church. The excuse is always the age of children and carrying them to and fro also becomes a burden.

Thanksgiving to God on the birth of a child is a rare tradition in most of the churches in Zimbabwe. Most women only shared about baptism. Thanksgiving is generally said in prayers. The women who responded to this part of the question just mentioned that “they pray and thank God when a child is born.” In my church, which is the Lutheran Church, people give thanks for baptism and usually this is of a small sum of money, paid as collection for baptism. This culture of thanksgiving is something for people to learn. In cases of barren families, when they are asking for children from God, they fast and tithe, but when they get children sometimes they forget to thank the Lord.

Some of the women whom I interviewed stated that they were once barren and latter had a child. One woman said that “she said prayers to thank God, but she did not take anything to church as thanksgiving”. It is also important to note that I managed to come across only eight of such women from the 100 women that I interviewed. One of them had been barren and married for 6 years. She had divorced by the time I interviewed her in 2004. In 2005 she married another man and now she is pregnant. She shared with me her miserable time of barrenness and her new exciting experience of being pregnant now. She also shared that she will thank the Lord when she gives birth to the child, but she does not know how yet.

Mainline churches have well-established cultural thanksgiving days on the church calendar, but people do not seem to use this opportunity to express their joy for fertility to the church. Instead I heard in several interviews that when women later conceive, they do not want to ascribe this power to God. They start mentioning people who healed them or that they managed through having sex with a different fertile man. Only a few stories of barren women who later became fertile gave tribute to the power of God. Some women, especially from the Apostolic Churches, praise the power of the prophet who will have prayed for them. It seems that joy misdirects people so that the overwhelming joy of having a child makes some women lose focus. This is not only the case for the Karanga women, but also for men. They forget in some cases to thank the Lord. This aspect of being forgetful in joyful times is in human nature in general.

Theme—3—

3.4 Analysis of the Text – 1 Sam: 1:-2:7

Text is made available and read in the preferred version as identified:

KARANGA version of RSV (newer)	NRSV	KING JAMES	JERUSALEM BIBLE
11%	86%	3%	0%

The Newer Karanga and English versions of the New Revised Standard Version were used. 89% of the respondents preferred to read and respond in English. Almost all the women could read the text on their own, except a few old women whom I had to help with the reading. This group was constituted by the old and the illiterate. They preferred using the (Newer) Karanga version of the Revised Standard version.

19 What do you think was (were) the problem(s) of the family in the text? *Chinyi changa chichinetsa mumhuri iri munyaya iyi sokuvona kwako?*

All the women responded to this question. The majority, 58%, wrote that the problem was barrenness. The reason could be that barrenness is the most pronounced problem in the text. It seems that barrenness is the cause of all the other problems encountered in the text.

The other 42% suggested that, in addition to barrenness, there are other problems in the family of Elkanah. There was the problem of hatred between the two wives of Elkanah (1 Sam 1:6). Peninnah mocked Hannah for her barrenness. Hannah lived a very sad life that was caused by the taunts from her rival wife.

Secondly, the women identified Hannah as a lonely woman in her life. She did not have children to give her company. At the sacrificial meal she received only her portion, while her rival received portions for her children. This suggests someone who was lonely. The moment of sharing the sacrificial meal at Shiloh must have been the worst time that Hannah would feel the pain of her barrenness. She is described as one who would cry and not eat.

Thirdly there was the problem that the husband failed to notice how deeply Hannah was affected by her barrenness. Elkanah took time before he noticed and responded to his wife's problem. The text tells us that year-by-year they went to sacrifice and each year Hannah was troubled, but Elkanah did not notice (1 Sam 1:6-7). This suggests that the problem was very old in the family. Hannah had been barren for many years. The only visit when Elkanah shows some concern of Hannah's barrenness is the visit that Hannah was also blessed by fertility. Although the husband in his expression of concern, tried to console his wife with love and assurance, for Hannah the love of her husband could not replace the need for children in her life. The need for children became worse even after her husband had assured her of his love. The text says that she "rose and presented herself before the Lord" (1 Sam 1:9). This shows that Hannah was not content by her husband's love alone.

The fourth problem raised by the women was that Hannah was the only one who was deeply troubled by her barrenness. As a result she alone sought to find an answer to her barrenness through prayer. The child was born as a result of the initiative of Hannah. Hannah bears the problem of barrenness, the prayer request, and she owns the child who was to be born. Hannah dedicates the child to God as a Nazarite, without consulting her husband because she felt that the child was an answer to her own prayer alone. Hannah's vow is a potential

problem to the relationship between her and her husband, although Elkanah in this instance did not question Hannah for not consulting him..

The women identified Hannah as the suffering character in the text. She bears all the problems, and she suffers until she finds an answer. The women in their reading of the story, felt very sorry for Hannah and they sympathised with her problems.

20	The text tells us that “God closed her womb.” What do you think were the reasons for this? <i>Magwaro anotiudza kuti “Mwari vakapfiga chibereko chake”. Ko chinyi chingava chikonzero chaMwari kuita izvi?</i>
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I got two different answers to this question. Only 72% of the women responded. The other 28% did not respond. About 25% of those who responded, said that, the reason why God closed her womb was that, God wanted to prepare Hannah for a blessing. They said that it is often usual that before God gives a person a gift, he makes the person suffer first. In this case Hannah was made to suffer with a closed womb as a way of preparing her for the gift of a child. The fact that Hannah had a child after a period of suffering barrenness, this made her to realise, that the child was a blessing and be appreciative of the gift of blessing. This realisation made her to remember to thank God and to be able also to identify the power of God that he could open and close the womb.

One of the barren woman responded that she thinks that God also closed her womb. She also said that she thinks God makes her suffer barrenness as a way of preparing her for a special gift or mission.

The other 47% felt that the closing of the womb was a curse. They said that when someone suffers barrenness, it is a curse from God. Their view was that all suffering is a curse from

God. Most of the women who held this view were from the African Initiated Churches. According to the doctrine of these churches, they explain suffering and misfortune as either a curse or witchcraft. In this case, therefore, Hannah was cursed by God. The women went further to say that God does not curse forever. He curses and redeems his people. In the story of Hannah, the child comes as redemption from barrenness to fertility, from curse to blessing.

<p>21 Do you consider (fertility) having children as blessing from God, and (barrenness) as curse? <i>Ko ungati mbereko chikomborero cha Mwari uye kushaya mbereko kutukwa na Mwari here?</i></p>

Most women responded to this question. I managed to obtain two categories of answers. About 76% of the respondents shared that barrenness is a curse. These women are of mixed biography. The other 13%, who include also the barren women, said that barrenness is not a curse, but a condition in life that God allows in a person. The remaining 11% did not respond, all of whom are of a young age. Their reason for not responding is, however, not known.

3.4.1 Barrenness as Blessing and Curse

From the research that I carried out, 76% of the Christian women feel that barrenness is an affliction or curse from God. They think that God is the controller of all fertility. One woman said that “to be barren is an affliction from God.” But the barren women shared that they do not regard their barrenness as a curse. Instead they stay in the hope that one day God will look upon them with favour and give them children. They said that they stay in the hope that, “God knows” (“*Mwari vanoziwa*”); God will intervene (“*Mwari vachapindira*”); “God will hear” (“*Mwari vachanzwa*”); “God has a cause” (“*Mwari vanechikonzera*”); “God knows the time” (“*Mwari vanoziwa nguva*”). The following are some of the other responses that I received. They seem to put the hope and blame on God. Other fertile women also held the

same concept with the barren women. They said that barrenness is not a curse. One respondent said "barrenness is a condition that God allows to be on a person, not necessarily that God curses that person."

On reading the text, most women concluded that in the in the story of Hannah, the blame of barrenness rests with God. "God closed her womb". Hannah's infertility was a deliberate act of God. Only the educated women had a different understanding of the motive of God. They said that the motive of God was not to curse Hannah, but to make her experience a period of hardship in preparation of the blessing that was to come. But the narrator does not make the reader read it this way. However, it would seem from the suffering of heart that Hannah expresses and from the taunts and vexation of Peninnah that Hannah went through hell. In responses the women felt sorry for Hannah in her cursed situation. The phrase, "God remember her," suggests that God looked at her with favour, and blessed her with fertility.

The barren women did not want to use the word "curse". They said that it was the will of God. The word "curse" takes away their hope and that it makes them feel guilty of having sinned.

While the Bible does not use the word "curse" openly in its language of barrenness, the word "blessing" is in common usage. One would, therefore, infer that the opposite of blessing would be a curse. Most fertility acts were as a cause of a blessing that would have been evoked either by God or by someone who holds a religious office.

When someone is "remembered" (Gen 30:22; 1 Sam 1:19) it is through word play that someone would have been forgotten. Forgotten can imply to be neglected, lost and ignored.

Can we say that these were the experiences of Hannah? It would seem so from a literary point of view. She felt left alone, "cursed", forgotten, and not considered. Her prayer asked for God to remember, as in consider and bless – "remove from me the curse of not having children and bless me – make me fertile". This seems to have been the prayer of Hannah. When the child is granted through the blessing of a priest, Hannah is relieved of the burden of shame caused by her barrenness. She sings a song of thanksgiving to express her change of status. It is so within the Karanga that when a child is born the woman gets a feeling of relief – relief from carrying the pregnancy and relief from the fears of failure to have a baby. Childbirth makes a woman conquer the forces of evil and barrenness.

3.4.2 Location *vis a vis* blessing and curse

I discovered through my research that the social and cultural location of a person has some bearing on the way a person thinks about blessing.

The response of the poor and the middle-class people was that infertility is a curse from God. They saw in barrenness the continued suffering of poverty. Their explanation was that children are a blessing of wealth from God. They identified that children support the parent, help with work and support the community at large. Thus when one is poor and one has no children, then one continues to suffer, and it becomes a curse. For the poor who have children, they hope for a better life in future when their children pass school and obtain jobs, and when they receive support from their children in their times of old age. It is in these communities of the poor people of low income that people accuse each other of witchcraft and jealousy when it comes to childbearing.

The rich people responded that barrenness has a natural cause. It is a matter of God's choice and also a form of God's gift. They were not concerned about investing in children. Most of them said that their children go overseas to live there, so they do not invest in them. They are of the opinion that when they become older their money is going to take care of them.

The text that we have read presents a family of peasant farmers. It could be that children were important to them because according to Israelite culture a "son", "heir", was very important. One could have daughters, but sons were of more importance. Hannah was afflicted because she had no heir or someone to look after her in her old age. In her location and social status, children were also important for helping with work.

22 Who feels afflicted by barrenness and who takes the initiative to resolve it, in the text? Why? *Ko ndiani anoonadambudziko nokushayikwa kwebereko , uye ndiani anotsvaka kugadzirisa dambudziko iri munyaya yataverenga?*

All the women answered this question and they all expressed that in their context it is the women who are considered barren, and also it is the women who seek the solution to this problem. So, on reading about Hannah, the Karanga barren women were able to say, "Here is one like us." The only problem is in where to find help. Some of the Karanga women try traditional means of solving the problem: that of using herbs and following the instructions of witchdoctors. Some use ways of trickery. It is in Hannah that the reader learns to find God.

Hannah finds in God a God who knows, who creates, who listens and answers prayers. This was the summary of the women's reading of Hannah. They said that when Hannah found her answer in God, things changed in her life. She was changed from the state of barrenness to that of fertility.

In this text God is given as one who knows. Hannah sings in this vein. "God knows the affliction of human hearts" said one old church woman. God knows the number of our days, He knows what our future holds. He knows the strength and weaknesses of our hearts. The God of Hannah is one who creates and cares for the poor. He is a God who guards the feet of his faithful ones.

In her prayer Hannah is not only formative in terms of changing things, but she is formative in terms of faith. She teaches about God and helps people to form their faith in this God – a God who guards the feet of his people. One of the Karanga women said: "I wish I could have the faith like that of Hannah." In their conclusion of the reading of Hannah, they all echoed that Hannah is a teacher of faith and hope in God.

23 How is the problem of barrenness resolved in the Karanga society? <i>Ko pachikaranga dambudziko rembereko rinogadzirisva sei?</i>

The respondents generally expressed that women with no children carry in them an inner torment and desperation and they never stop trying until they have a child, or else die. These views were held by 91% of the respondents to this question. The other 9% did not respond. Those who responded gave varied answers.

Some, who constituted 73%, said that there is some African medication that one can obtain from traditional healers which is able to cure barrenness. Among the respondents, one said that: "I was barren for 12 years and I got some treatment from a traditional healer and I had a child." Another respondent said: "I am a traditional healer myself and I have healed thousands of women and men who were barren." This traditional healing is strongly held among the Karanga.

Another 18% of the respondents raised the issue of surrogate motherhood. The women who raised this are mostly the elderly those in the age of 41 years and above. These women responded that one of the old traditional methods of solving barrenness was that of surrogate motherhood.

Upon noticing the problem of barrenness, the family of the wife would quickly give the man another wife. This wife is called "*Chinutsa mapfihwa*", "One who is meant to light the fire". *Chimutsa mapfihwa* was also given in the event that one's wife died. These women never enjoyed love, because they were just given without any personal love affections involved.

It is in my view that the Karanga people have now changed. Barrenness is solved by divorce or marriage of another wife, or that the perceived woman would look for another man (*Chikomba*) out of wedlock, just to have a child. The problem arising from such actions is that of contracting Aids. In our present day context of HIV, most victims lose their lives in the process of trying to address barrenness. They exchange sexual partners and eventually die. In our church we have lost many members in this way. My own sister died in the same circumstances.

The young women who participated in my research said that the problem of surrogate mothers is that one ends up sharing the affections of the husband and one has to fight for the man. They further shared that fighting and jealousy may also cause death through witchcraft or poisoning each other. One woman said that "usually in polygamous marriages, the women end up resorting to 'love enticing herbs', '*mufuhwira*', as a means of winning over the man to

their side. These medicines either kill the man or they just make him docile – one who is sedated all the time”.

Yet in the same respect, a man like Elkanah would think that women who rest in the comfort of the love of their husbands should not worry about anything, and even childlessness should not disturb them. But in Hannah we find that her situation made her very unhappy, suggesting to the reader that a child is more important than a husband. While Hannah loved her husband she needed children for her emotional fulfilment.

24 How do you resolve the problem of barrenness in your denomination? <i>Ko muchitendero chenyu munogadzirisa sei dambudziko rokushaya mbereko?</i>
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All the women responded to this question. 81% held a common view that barrenness is resolved by prayer in their churches. The church leaders (pastors, prophets) pray for the barren women. While 19% said that in their church no one talks about this problem and it consequently does not seem to exist. Those who are barren quietly find solutions outside the church. They said that barrenness is not openly talked about. It would seem that the pastors in these churches are not aware how serious the problem of barrenness is affecting people.

Those who said that barrenness is solved by prayer in their churches, also expressed concern that there is so much corrupt behaviour of the healers that accompanies this healing. It has been found that during the process women get raped by the healers. One Methodist woman mentioned a public story that their Bishop was removed because of adultery. There are quite a number of adultery cases of the clergy that have been reported through the mass media. Another Apostolic churchwoman said that within their sect there have been so many rape cases that go either unreported, or are reported as we read in the newspapers. The ironic

aspect about it is that some of the rape cases happen where a woman goes to consult a "priest" or "prophet" of a church regarding her barrenness. Then the "prophet" rapes or he asks the woman to have sexual relations so that the woman can conceive. It is so common a practice that most of the children born within barren families are children of the "prophets" concerned.

3.4.3 The intervention of God as Human Redemption

On reading Hannah the women were able to identify the intervention of God in human life and they referred to this in their answers. The women shared testimonies of how God has answered their different prayers and how their lives have been changed.

On interviewing one of the barren women, she shared her hope that "one day God will intervene like he intervened in Hannah's life". Another woman shared that "she had been married for twenty years and had children afterwards". She called this God's intervention. Human beings, when addressed in a Christian context, testify to the fact of God's intervention in their lives.

It would seem from the story of Hannah that God intervenes only when one opens one's heart. The Karanga women shared a common cause that one has to open his or her heart through serious prayers for God to intervene.

3.4.4 Identifying God as the Answer

Karanga women in their reading of the text were able to identify that it was the woman who identified the problem of barrenness and who also identified prayer as the solution. When I read the responses, it seemed to me that Hannah played a formative role in the lives of other barren women. The Karanga women identified themselves with Hannah and were able to mention that “one needs to have the same determination in prayer like that of Hannah.”

It would seem to me that Elkanah saw no problem in his marriage to Hannah since he loved her and children were provided for him and for the whole family by the second wife. As for Hannah though, this was not enough.

Callaway also says that in the barren narratives of the Old Testament, it is only the women who take action to resolve the problem, while in the Ugaritic and Akkadian narratives it is the men who take action (1986:16). The Bible refers to barren women, and not men (1986:16-17).

One of the women said in her response that “when you love someone you must learn to give so as to be given.” She mentioned a Karanga saying which says, “*Chindiro chinopfumba kunobva chimwe*”, meaning “A plate goes the direction where the other one came from”. This woman who repeated this idiom said “in worship we must not just ask, but also give to God so as to be given what we ask for”. She further explained that the nature of God is such that he wants also to receive gifts from us – gifts of the things that we want and not of the things that we do not want. In relation to this the woman said Hannah gave her only son. The idea in this sharing was that, to give is to be given, and that God intervenes in human life.

- 25 Tell a story of your personal experience of barrenness that you have either witnessed or experienced in your life and make a comment in the light of blessing or curse.
Imbotiudzawo zvawakamboona kana kunzwa ne zve nyaya dzokushaya mbereko, tipewo kanyaya kako ugodudzira uchishandisa shoko rokuti iropafadzo kana kuti uku kutukwa.

In response to this question, all the women gave different stories of either what they experienced and also what they saw and heard about other barren women. I decided to choose only four stories out of all these. My criteria for doing this are that I chose two stories from barren women. One story is from a barren woman who was never blessed and second story is from a barren woman who was later blessed. The third story is a family experience of barrenness. The fourth story was chosen from stories of barrenness that were collected from communities.

3.4.5 Barrenness stories

Story one

An experience of a barren woman who was never blessed

The woman told her story that “I have been married for 45 years now and I do not have a child. In my life I have tried all the traditional herbs to treat myself but it did not work. I have also tried to pray but God seems not to answer my prayer. At one time I joined the Apostolic church so as to receive a cure, but all was in vain. I have also tried to have sex with other men privately, but this has not helped me. I have also seen different doctors and it has not worked out. I have now given up on any treatment and I am just hoping on the day that God will decide to help me.

My sister has given me one of her children to stay with me, and this child is giving me company, but I still feel that I need a child of my own. In my church no one seems to want to share with me openly about my barren problem. They just look at me as if all things are normal. It seems that people are now taking my situation as normal. Sometimes I get very lonely and start thinking a lot about my problem. My husband has married another woman and they have children. He has lost affection for me and does not often visit my bedroom. I have also come to dislike sex as a result. I always feel that my life is empty”.

Story two

A barren woman who was later blessed.

“I was married for seven years without having a child. My husband almost divorced me, because of pressure from his family. Soon after our marriage we used to pray together with my husband for our problem. Later my husband gave up and started to trouble me. He would tell me to go back to my parents but I did not. I remember that one day he said to me that “I wont have sex with you because you are barren you make me waste my energy.” After years of praying together with other church members, I became pregnant. Now I have two daughters. God blessed me”.

Story three

A story of barrenness that happened in a church

One woman narrated a story that there was couple in her church who had been married for ten years and had no children. The man decided to have a girlfriend and they had a child.

Upon hearing this the wife also on the other hand found a boyfriend and she conceived and also had a child. The husband thinks that the child is his since he had a child with his girlfriend. But people say that this man is barren and both these two women cheated him to say that these were his children. It could be that the girlfriend knew about the desperation of the man and she had sex with another man, who made her pregnant. The couple is happily married now.

Story four

A story that happened in a community

This story is from a community and church that one of the respondents visits. The woman told a story that "There was a man in my church who married six times and none of his wives had any children. This man never wanted to believe that he was infertile. Instead he thought that he was a very unfortunate man who always met with barren women. His sixth wife deserted him. He later married a woman who had her own children and in their marriage they have one child. He strongly believes that the child is his, but people think that this woman was getting children from other men in the community. She was doing this because she knew that the husband was desperate for children."

These and other stories made me realise that there is a great deal of suffering that people are going through in their marital life.

3.4.6 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter provided Karanga womens' responses to barrenness and fertility, as well as their reading of 1 Samuel 1:1-2:10. This was achieved through giving a report and discussions of the responses that came from the interviews, carried out during my research. As a way of summarising this chapter, I am going to give a summary of each theme of the questionnaire. This will help to emphasise the points made in a more logical manner.

Theme -1-Biographical data

I managed to interview 100 women with mixed biographical data. The age of the women whom I interviewed ranged from 21 to 50+ years. Women of 30-50 years of age were in the majority. Representation of the older women of 50+ years was only 18%, and yet they were very important for giving information about Karanga culture and its history.

About 98% of the women were married or had been married before. It was not easy to interview single women, because they were not keen to do so. Almost all women interviewed are Christians who belong to different denominations. The problems of human suffering, death, oppression and hunger were given as the main drivers for people's church attendance. In a country that is going through a phase of economic collapse, high rate of HIV/Aids, people resort to church as a means of finding help and comfort.

But despite the fact that these women are Christian, they also follow their traditional beliefs and culture. This is true of most Africans. They find it hard to stop worshipping their ancestors. As a result when things go wrong in their lives, they call upon both their ancestors and God for help.

In terms of education, only 7% of the women interviewed were illiterate. The reason is that the level of literacy in Zimbabwe is very high. Since independence, the Zimbabwe government built many secondary schools and made primary education free. Secondary education is affordable, and thus many people receive an education. Form four became the average level of education for most people.

Most of the women whom I interviewed described themselves as middle class. There was a small representation of 26% of the poor and 16% of the rich. It seemed to me that women felt comfortable to describe themselves as middle class even in a context of a collapsing economy which is hard hit by shortages of basic commodities, such as sugar, meal, oil, soap and fuel. Most women identified themselves as employed, but the largest number are in fact self-employed. The economic problems of Zimbabwe have forced most people to leave their jobs and start something of their own. Others have been retrenched from their jobs because the companies were no longer able to pay them. This has placed people into situations where they have to start up their own small projects. These are some of the challenges that add up to the stress with which people of Zimbabwe have to live today.

Theme-2- Karanga cultural Understanding of Fertility and Barrenness

The set of questions in this theme was meant to give information about the Karanga understanding of barrenness and fertility. The first three questions asked about the concept of family and marriage according to the Karanga. In response to these questions, women defined family among the Karanga as one that includes father, mother, children and all blood relatives. There were also a few who described family in terms of a nucleus. These were mostly the rich and the barren women. They had their own reasons for this. Their definition of a nucleus family did not include children. The barren made this description because they

have no children. The rich people seem to have formulated their definition from an economic point of view. However, the majority of the women held that the concept of family in Karanga culture is that of an extended family. It was also shared that a family with no children is not a family. Children qualify a social unit to become a family.

Marriage is said to be a major aspect of Karanga life. The women gave many reasons for marriage. Two major reasons for marrying that were given are:

- (a) that it is according to God's will for one to marry, that one can build a home and start a family.
- (b) a woman can fulfil her feminine duties by having children, and that one can build her own home.

In both instances it seems that the major reasons why people marry among the Karanga are that one can build a home, and that one can have children. Procreation emerges as the main reason for marriage. This means that if one cannot have children, then the whole purpose of marrying is defeated.

On the same note, the concept of building a home is also an important theme and for Karanga home is called *musha*. This refers to the village home where one is born and for city residence is called a house and not a home. Karanga people value their homes where they were born. A home gives a person a sense of belonging and a source of origin. Home is from where a person originates. Home is a place where members of a family are buried when they die; the home is the final resting place. When Karangas perform the ritual of burying of the umbilical cord, this is done at home. The home of a family is built at the husband's village.

The women reported also that polygamy is no longer common. However, there are a few exceptions where barrenness is resolved by forming a polygamous family. Also a few men marry two wives just for the purpose of lust.

Barrenness was reported to be a serious problem that is even life threatening. This problem is said to affect women and not men. Only women are said to be barren. These barren women are treated with shame and disgrace. Terms such as *ngomwa*, *ruware* were explained as language that is used to inflict barrenness upon women. *Ngomwa* used to refer to a barren man. But in everyday use, *ngomwa* refers to barren women. The reason could be that barrenness is usually associated with women, so the term is loosely used to refer to barren women. As a result, it would seem that there is no term used to refer to a barren man, because a man is never said to be barren.

The causes of barrenness were given as witchcraft, diseases, medical, the use of family planning pills before marriage, evil spirits and promiscuity and abortion. Most cases of barrenness are attributed to witchcraft.

The women also pointed out clearly that a son is more desirable than a daughter. A son is preferred for the purpose of inheritance and for continuing the father's name when he dies.

When a child is born according to the Karanga culture, there are rituals that are performed to protect the child from all evil and any cause of death. These rituals are known as *kurapira nhova* and *kusungira zango*. Christians also participate in these rituals.

Naming and weaning are two major rites that are also performed when a child is born. This is done in addition to the above rituals. A child is given a name that carries with it a meaning. Usually these names emanate from the experiences of the parents, or it could be a name of a relative.

In summary it would seem that Karanga value childbirth to the extent that barren women are marginalised in the societies where they live. These women live with shame and disgrace.

Theme-3- Karanga Reading of 1 Samuel 1:-2:7

This theme was about the analysis of the text that the Karanga women were to read and interpret in the way that they understood it. They also had to relate the text to the problem of barrenness and curse.

Women were able to identify that the problem in the text was that of barrenness. The barren woman Hannah suffered the torments of the fertile mother Peninnah. Because of barrenness Hannah was moved to prayer. She prayed with hope of getting a child. Her husband was very concerned about her situation. This situation of Hannah's barrenness was experienced for years. Hannah felt very bad about her barrenness. She would not eat and she was sad all the time. She felt that she was with no honour from her rival wife. Hannah's barren situation and misery, is emphasised in the text.

About 76% of the women responded that barrenness is an affliction from God. They explained the suffering of barren women as a curse. Even in the case of Hannah they said that although she had a child at the end, her period of suffering should be explained as curse. The

hope of Hannah was also an encouraging factor to the Karanga barren women. They shared that they stay in the hope that God will one day look upon them and bless them.

The barren women did not want to use the word curse. They said that the word curse takes away their hope. The Bible also does not use the word curse directly, but it uses the word blessing in most fertility situations.

The respondents said to be remembered implies that one must have been forgotten in the first place. When a person is forgotten by those who look after him/her, the person is bound to suffer. This suffering can be explained as a curse. They said that Hannah suffered the curse of being forgotten by God, and she later enjoyed the blessing of having a child through the act of being remembered by God. The phrase “to remember” seems to refer to receiving the gift of fertility. The birth of Samuel is a sign that “God remembered Hannah”, or that God stopped cursing Hannah.

The women said that the curse of barrenness may not be as a result of sin, but that God may decide to make one suffer before he gives one something of value. When one suffers in this context, it means that “God has forgotten you.” Therefore, “to be forgotten” would mean not to be helped by God at that time and then one suffers. This suffering then becomes a curse. So for the women who suffer barrenness, one could say that they were cursed, because they suffer many torments from their communities.

Again in this theme, the women repeatedly emphasised that it is the women who are afflicted by barrenness, and it is again the women who seek to find a solution for it. On reading

Hannah, the Karanga women were able to identify their problems with her. Hannah finds her answer through prayer.

The women learnt from Hannah's song of thanks giving that God knows, listens, hears, and answers prayers. In summary, the women's reading of Hannah was that, when Hannah found her answer to her prayer over her barrenness, she was changed or transformed. She was changed from barrenness to fertility, from sadness to happiness, from not eating to eating, and from crying to rejoicing, from agony and anguish to joy and singing, from being cursed with suffering to being blessed with a child. Her song of praise shows a woman who is rejoicing with joy of fertility. This suggests that fertility gives a woman complete joy, and that those who are barren do not experience joy. Karanga women understood God in the text as one who gives sorrow and joy. He closes the womb, and opens it, he kills and brings to life, makes poor and makes rich, brings low and also exalts. (1 Sam 2:6-7).

Karanga women also find the person Hannah to be formative. She teaches other women about strong faith and patience to wait upon God. She teaches other women about where to find the solution for barrenness. The Karanga women said that they attempted to resolve barrenness by taking some traditional herbs. But in the story one learns that there is no need for herbs in the cure for barrenness, because one needs to ask God, and He intervenes in human life. God hears and intervenes in the lives of the marginalised.

The problem that was identified was that of the culture of suffering in silence. The barren women do not wish to come out in the open with their problems. Hannah never made her problem a secret. When Elkanah enquired about her problem, she mentioned it to him. When the priest accused her of drunkenness, she was quick to relate her problem. It seems that

Karanga women suffer a great deal in silence in the event that the family fails to have a child. They internalise the problem and make it their own.

In modern societies barrenness is not an issue. Barren people preoccupy themselves with study, work and businesses. They emphasise that having children are for those who are fertile, because they consider child bearing as a hindrance to their daily life chores. While the old traditional societies emphasise having many children, and a failure to have one is an issue of distress.

As a result Karanga reading opened up that the anguish and ostracising of a barren woman makes barrenness a curse. In this chapter, Karanga strongly emphasised that a barren woman is without honour in her community and family. She is regarded as an outcast. These women suffer a lot. Their suffering becomes a curse in their lives. Karanga women's reading of the text interpreted the suffering of Hannah as a curse. The same anguish could be read from the stories of barrenness given in the interviews. This shows that barrenness can give a person a perpetual life of suffering.

While the Karanga interpret barrenness as a curse from God, the churches seem to do very little about this problem. It is most appropriate that the churches should help to address the problem of barrenness, since people take it to be a curse from God who allows them to suffer barrenness. Barrenness in this case is found to be a major theological problem that calls for a theological intervention to its solution.

The questions that we should ask at this stage are:

- why does God curse his people with barrenness?

- Is this not contrary to his creation mandate that human beings should multiply and fill the earth?
- Is fertility blessing not a gift that one receives at creation without asking?
- What do we learn from being cursed and from being blessed?
- What do we learn from names in the Bible and Karanga?

These questions, and other issues that were raised in the previous chapters, will be addressed in the next chapter as a contribution to the conclusion of this dissertation.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONTINUITY AND DISCONTINUITY BETWEEN THE KARANGA AND THE OLD TESTAMENT VIEWS ON BARRENNESS AND FERTILITY

The hypotheses given at the beginning of this dissertation are as follows,

- “a- Fertility and barrenness in the Old Testament should be understood in close conjunction with blessing and cursing as theological concepts in ancient Israel culture.
- b- Fertility and barrenness could also be examined in a relevant and contextual manner by relating it to the culture and understanding of the Karanga people of Southern Zimbabwe .
- c- It is presupposed that a socio-rhetorical exegesis of the Hannah narrative (1 Samuel 1:1-2:10) would assist the Karanga women to gain more theological insight in their understanding of barrenness and fertility.”

Literature survey shows that there has been substantive study of the text of Hannah and the topics of fertility and barrenness. This dissertation was set to go a step further than the work of the commentaries and examine how an old text of Hannah that was meant to convey a message not of Barrenness but that of the hopelessness of Israel during her time of conflicts, can remain usefull and relevant to the context of Karanga today.

Previous scholarship has proved beyond doubt that this is the work of the Deuteronomistic historian who wrote in response to two conflicts of Israel. One was an internal conflict of the religious corruptness of the house of Eli which God could not let continue, and the defeat and capture of the Ark of the Lord by the Philistines, which God also could not let continue. The Deuteronomistic historian writes during the time when Israel was in exile, and they were

asking questions about their hopeless situation, whether God was going to liberate and restore them again. This history of the suffering of Israel stretches over a long period of time, from the decline of the Judian kingdom to the time of exile in 6 century BC (Birch 1998:2:967-968) The response of the Deuteronomistic historian was meant to give Israel hope out of hopelessness. This recorded in a story of a barren woman Hannah who was later blessed.

As part of the conclusion of this dissertation, I suggest a brief discussion of identified topics of continuity and discontinuity between the Karanga and the Old Testament views on Barrenness and Fertility and how the hypothesis was is proved. These discussions will help to see the relevance of Hannah to Karanga context of Fertility and Barrenness.

These topics are:

- Fertility and Barrenness as Blessing and Curse.
- Religious Ethics in the text of 1 Samuel 1:1-2:10.
- Paradigm of Shame and Honour, as social status.
- Paradigm of Family.
- Names and naming.
- Theology of the Song of Hannah.
- conclusion

4.1 Fertility and barrenness as blessing and curse

It was proved that both the Old Testament and the Karanga culture understand fertility and barrenness in terms of blessing and cursing.

According to the definitions given in the beginning of the thesis, fertility generally means the power to procreate, being able to conceive or able to produce offspring, while barrenness is the inability to produce offspring.

Callaway (1986:15) shows that fertility is a blessing from God. Her study examines the barren matriarchal traditions. She says that:

“In the Pentateuch the blessing of fruitfulness given at creation (Gen. 1:28), to Noah (Gen. 9:7), to Abraham (Gen. 12:2-3, 15:55, 17:4-8), Isaac (Gen. 26:3-5) and Jacob (Gen. 28:13-15) are renewed in the covenant blessing of Deut. 18:1-4, contingent upon Israel's obedience. The Covenant Code concludes with the promise that no-one will be barren in Israel (Exod. 12:26 and also in Deut. 7:14) ... Again in the Holiness Code in Leviticus 26 the blessing of fruitfulness is promised.”

It is evident from the above statements of Callaway and also from the Bible that the theme of fertility comes as a result of blessing. Karanga cultural understanding also alludes to this blessing. This is evident first from the creation narratives as "God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply ...'" (Gen 1:28). This theme is found throughout the Pentateuch. Offspring remains a sign or a product of the blessings of God. McKeown (2003:86) gives the following summary of fertility as blessing in the Pentateuch:

“Abraham's descendants would be as numerous as the stars or grains of sand (Gen. 15:5, 22:16-18), Sarah would be the mother of nations (Gen. 17:16), Ishmael would be the father of twelve rulers (Gen. 17:20), Jacob's descendants would be 'a community of peoples' (Gen. 48:4), Joseph was described as 'a fruitful vine' and received blessings of 'the breast and womb' (Gen. 49:22-26) and Israel's children animals and crops would be fertile and numerous" (Deut. 7:13-14)”

In addition to the above we also read (Gen. 24:60) that her family blesses Rebecca as she leaves to become Isaac's wife. The texts show us that blessing and fertility were not only meant for human procreation. The land of Isaac was also blessed with fertility and he reaped

hundredfold. The Lord blessed him with flocks and herds and a great household (Gen. 26:12-14).

All this adds up to the previous arguments in this discussion that fertility comes as a blessing of God. The scope and objective of the researcher of this dissertation was to answer such questions as: If fertility is blessing from God, how then do we explain and resolve the problem of barrenness that causes so much affliction on women? Can we then explain barrenness as a curse?

Callaway says, "If an important form of blessing in the Ancient Near East is the blessing of fruitfulness, one of the major forms of curse is the curse of barrenness" (1986:15). She goes further to say that given that fertility is a blessing from God, we would expect barrenness to be a great misfortune and a sign of divine disfavour (1986:16). An examination of the biblical texts reveals this through incidents of barrenness in which God is said to have cursed his people. A good example is found in Genesis. 3:17-19: God cursed the ground such that thorns and thistles made it more difficult to cultivate and yield.

According to another view barrenness is perceived as punishment. This is scattered in texts like Leviticus. 20:10-21, portrayed as a legal issue (2 Sam. 6:23, Job 18:19, Hos. 9:10-18, Prov. 30:15-16 and Isa. 14:22). In some other biblical instances of barrenness the texts record that God closed the womb of a barren woman, like in the case of Hannah (1 Sam. 1-5) and in the wives of Abimelech, the Lord had closed fast the wombs of the house of Abimelech (Gen. 10:18). But in these instances it is not mentioned explicitly that closing of the womb is a curse. One could only infer from the sufferings of the women involved that closing of the womb was experienced as a curse against the sufferer.

Some of the curse-situations in the Bible may be deduced from the circumstances in which the barren later have children. When a biblical barren woman has a child, we are told that the Lord first blesses her to be fertile. A good example of this is Sarah (in Gen. 11:30): She is initially said to be barren (Gen. 17:16), Sarai becomes Sarah, and she is blessed and is promised to “give rise to nations and king”. Another example is that of Leah and Rachel. These women are said to be barren at first and then later God opens their wombs (Gen. 29:31, 30:22). In the case of Rachel (Gen. 30:22) the Lord heeded her. This suggests that the Lord had favour upon her.

The pattern of movement from barrenness to fertility also suggests the movement from curse to blessing. Although in some cases of biblical texts they do not clearly state that the woman was cursed, the circumstances in the pattern denote divine disfavour or punishment, which suggests a curse. The end-result of a blessing that comes in the form of fertility suggests divine favour, where God is seen in action, opening the womb.

The Karanga also understand fertility and barrenness as blessing and curse. Aschwanden (1982:22) says that the symbols of a person are blood and fertility, which are also the two most important of Karanga symbols). He goes further to say that a person is one who one day becomes a *mudzimu*, ancestral spirit. To become a *mudzimu* is one of the Karanga’s highest goals of life. This is when a person reaches his greatest potential, when one gets to be honoured, loved, and feared by all. For a Karanga to die is not enough to become a *mudzimu*. Only when one leaves children of one’s own can one become a *mudzimu*. Fertility qualifies one to reach the highest position that he/she desires (1982:24).

Blood gives fundamental life, but fertility gives one the status of life after death. So when one fails to be a *mudzimu* because of infertility, the Karanga take it to be a curse. Witchcraft, other health disorders, bad spirits or God himself can cause infertility, and the result is that one who has no children suffers and is considered to be under a curse or punishment of some sort. Fertility helps the society to subordinate the ego-tendencies of a person to an aim. This aim means the more children one fathers, the more powerful one would become as a *mudzimu* (Hacket 1982:25). In addition Hacket (1992:95) says that, in the context of Hannah, children were also born for power and prestige. Therefore, the number of her children determined the drive for Hannah to participate in the celebration of the sacrifice. It would seem that a woman would gain even more prestige by the number of children she begot. Hannah mentions her children as her source of joy. Israelite families seem to have cherished having many children, like the Karanga people still do.

In their conversations with this researcher, the Karanga women also mentioned that Karanga men prefer sons to daughters for reasons of continuing the *vadzimu* clan of the family. Therefore, a Karanga man identifies himself with his children. Fertility and children become symbols of his ego, and they become his blessing in that manner. Accordingly Karanga children are not only for social status, but a source of happiness, a fulfilment of an ego and a blessing to oneself. When one has children, he or she has been blessed to a fullness of life and when one has no children, his or her ego is not fulfilled, there is nothing to identify with and there is no status after death. This translates to a curse and to illustrate that barrenness is a curse, when a man dies who has never married or has never had children, he is buried together with a mouse. This is done as a sign that the deceased is not regarded as an ancestor to anyone.

In addition the Karanga women in the previous chapter mentioned that barren women endure shame and dishonour, which causes the whole experience to be a cursed life. Barren women go through bitter experiences of being called witches and of being ostracised in their communities and of going through forced divorce. The women interviewed interpreted this as a curse.

The Karanga considers childbirth as receiving a child. This receiving of the gift of a child makes fertility a blessing. The blessing is found in the happiness of receiving and owning as being honoured.

4.2 Religious ethics in the text

The question is: how can we live in the evil world without participating in evil? Robbins (1996:129) says when an ethical question is addressed in the context of religious commitment; the special ways of thinking and acting are motivated by one's commitment to God. In the study of the social and cultural texture of Robbins, (1986:71), topics are introduced that can be studied to identify the relevant social and cultural texture. Some of these are *Introversionist*, which holds that the world is evil and irredeemable. Salvation can be achieved by getting out of it. Another topic mentioned by Robbins is the *Thaumaturgical* that is concerned with the individual's concern for relief from ills. The third topic is the *Reformist*, these are views that hold that the world is corrupt because of its corrupt social structures. If these structures can be changed, then people may receive salvation

The following discussion seeks to address these topics and examine the ethics that is found in the text.

The *Introversionist*: this topic does not give room for formulating ethical rules that govern this world in order for justice to prevail. It closes up the possibilities for human life and the hope for change. But one would like to think that there is always room for change if the culture and ethics of any given human setting are addressed relevantly in order to grapple for change. In the contexts where a culture could be changed, it is rather helpful to change it in the best possible means especially by way of creating another culture that counteracts the older one or one that develops from the older. The issues of barrenness do not affect only the Karanga women; they affect women differently in their diverse cultures and the result of the effect remains the same: pain, suffering, and agony, lament and death. Through this pain and suffering, culture plays a role and the intervention of God is questioned. But the solution out of the problem is not to get out of this world, but to try and redeem culture by influencing a change through using other cultures like biblical texts.

The second topic is that of the *Thaumaturgical*. It is true that every individual is concerned with his or her relief from ills. Like in the narrative of Hannah, Hannah is shown as a woman who was always concerned about her relief from the ill of barrenness. She prayed for this relief until she received it. The barren Karanga women expressed that they are concerned about the relief from the ill of barrenness and that of being marginalised. This salvation can be achieved by way of liberating a culture that maintains the problem of barrenness and fertility. In this instance, the narrative of Hannah can be used as a paradigm in the form of a model story to initiate change of the understanding of fertility and barrenness within the Karanga context. Janzen (1994:7-20) refers to biblical stories that can be used as paradigms or model stories for social change. He does so by giving different model stories.

Narratives from the Bible can be used positively to initiate change within other cultures. The narrative of Hannah is a model of barrenness that can be used to teach on how to endure barrenness. In this way the narrative becomes formative to other cultures. The text of Hannah is a powerful text that can be used to influence the Karanga women about their perception concerned with barrenness.

The reformists advocate that the corrupt social structures must be changed, so that people may receive salvation. The Karanga women emphasised on the corruptness of the social structures that uses barrenness to marginalise women. It is my view that these corrupt social structures can be changed in order for these women to get salvation from their culture. Culture can also be changed by way of forming another culture and women also have the potential to form a culture. This is exemplified by the biblical women in Israel's history who in a certain sense of the word formed cultures. The following are examples of this.

In the Patriarchal narratives, Sarah started a culture by not loving and sending away a surrogate mother (Gen 16-17). Rebecca furthers the role of her son who becomes Israel (Gen 29-30). "It is moreover the women who are the critical ancestors for the proper continuation of the Israelites. Isaac must come from Sarah and no other woman. Abraham's seed is not enough to guarantee his status. Similarly, Joseph must be Rachel's son. The blessing and the inheritance go to Jacob, Rebecca's favourite son, not to Esau, her husband's. The woman's wishes and God's wishes are one in this respect" (Niditch 1992:19). In addition, Hannah's desire for a child was contained in God's design. Hannah makes a suggestion to remain behind until the child is weaned and Elkannah agrees to the proposal of Hannah: "Do what seems best to you" (1 Sam 1:22-23).

I would suggest that women should initiate a culture of call and vocation in response to fertility problems. This culture would involve an understanding that fertility is a gift of God that He gives to those whom he chooses and for a purpose. This gift is given at different ages and for different purposes.

We were created for different purposes. Some were created to be examples of faith. Others were created to marry and procreate. Not all were set for marriages and for having children. In some cases, children can be seen as a hindrance to the purpose of God in one's life and as a result, God does not give them children. God knows not only our purpose, but also our ability and capability. He knows our numbered days on earth. Therefore, the culture of leaving things to the Lord should also be developed.

Women need to develop the culture of hope in God with regard to the problem of barrenness. We should be aware that the Lord may create social and cultural problems in order to accomplish his purpose (Bergen 1996:62). The Lord allows evil, yet he carries it out. Hope works as a good sustenance of life. Van Zyl (1998:190-992), who writes on hope in the pre-monarchical period of Israel, shows that the history of Israel was sustained in the hope for a child and hope for a land. This hope sustained the history of Israel throughout the patriarchal period.

In my opinion the problem of barrenness should use the language of hope in God's intervention as a way of solving the problem. If fertility is a blessing from God, those who are barren, need to wait for the time that God chooses to bless them.

Another reality with which we live is that of conflict as a mode of evil. Conflict was experienced by Hannah as inflicted on her by her rival Peninnah. Robbins (1996:129) states that if one cannot change a culture, one should find ways to live with it. Hannah could not change Peninnah, but she found a way to live with her. She resorted to prayer in times of conflict. The priest Eli was conflicted with Hannah's behaviour. However, Hannah in her response to conflict, used the gentle forces of faith. Her defence was her prayer, which argued her conscious integrity, innocence and serenity of spirit, even in times of unjustified criticism. In her loving care of Samuel, she became a prototype of the good mother, setting high morality and spirituality, which could bring a new order in the world. In her conflicting suggestion of not going with Elkanah to Shiloh to pay the vow, Hannah gave a reason that placed upon motherhood a high obligation and responsibility (Deen 1985:90). Hannah sets a paradigm of how to live with conflict without getting ourselves involved in it. This would be my response to the women who experience conflict from families and from church and society in terms of their problem of barrenness.

4.2.1 Paradigm of Family

Another paradigm that is encountered in Hannah is that of the family. Hannah's narrative presents her as a wife and a mother, therefore it is important to understand Hannah in the context of a family. The condition of barrenness affected Hannah and her husband together. The degree of the suffering may have varied between them.

In response to the interview, the Karanga women shared that family is an important concept in their culture, and that the Karanga value the unity and continuity of a family, which is sustained by having (male) children. Family was defined in varied definitions, but the

majority described it as extended, while the barren women restricted family to just father and mother. This restriction is caused by their barren experiences of not having children and not being liked by relatives of the husband.

Janzen (1994:12) says there is need for family *shalom* in all families. In the text, Elkanah tries to keep peace in his family by taking care and loving Hannah even more during her affliction of barrenness. The familial paradigm of Hannah can be used by the Karanga to understand that the problem of barrenness does not only affect an individual who is barren but it also is a problem that affects the whole family in which it is encountered.

Karanga experiences of barrenness take surrogate motherhood as one of the solutions of barrenness, this is done in order to keep the family together without divorcing the barren wife.

According to the history of the Patriarchs, surrogate mothers were used to solve the problems of barren women too. Callaway (1986:16) says:

in the Ancient Near East childlessness was clearly a serious problem for which as many legal and cultural correctives as possible were devised. Most of these legal and cultural options – polygamy, adoption, and the fathering of a child through the wife's personal slave – occur in the biblical narratives. But there are several differences between the biblical materials and the other Ancient Near East literature. First there is virtually no legal material in the Hebrew Bible, which provides means for a barren couple to obtain heirs (Deut 25:5-10).

The only recorded tradition and not law of which we read is that of the surrogate mother. Sarah gave her Egyptian slave girl to Abraham when she realised that she was barren (Gen 16:3), "that she may bear upon my knees" (Gen 30:3). It would be safe to assume that

surrogate motherhood was a custom that was common in the Ancient Near East. Slavery was also practiced and the masters or mistresses could donate a person's sexual services to someone else.

"Surrogate motherhood allowed a woman to regularize her status in a world in which children were a woman's status and in which childlessness was regarded as a virtual sign of divine disfavour (Gen 16:1; 30:1-2)" (Niditch 1992:20). The barren Rachel (Gen 30) also gave her slave girl to her husband. One would want to infer that this was the context of Hannah, since the reason for Elkanah to marry a second wife is not given.

The Hebrew text expresses that these surrogate mothers enjoyed no love from their husband. In the case of Hagar she was finally sent away. In the case of Peninnah the text never tells us about Elkanah's love for her, only that she had children as if she was used as a childbearing machine, while Hannah was loved, but this solution managed to keep the family together.

4.2.2 Paradigm of Shame and honour as social status

Another paradigm that is found in the text is that of shame and honour. Shame is a social condition that affects the poor and the marginalised, while honour is a social experience of the rich. In the text, Hannah's experience is that of shame, which in turn creates inferiority complexes. These social realities make people experience the gravity of evil and good differently. However, amidst this, God chooses the poor to manifest his power to the world because they create space for his manifestation.

Barrenness is a social status that puts one to shame. According to the Karanga women and according to the context of Hannah, a barren woman is without honour. She is looked down upon with shame and rejection. Barrenness is a status of defeat, and it makes a person lose confidence in all respects. One's self-esteem is lowered and the person does not function as a whole. Barrenness was described in this dissertation as a source of shame and helplessness. It would seem that when a person gets a child it is a sign of victory and a source of empowerment. Childbearing becomes an achievement and a source of honour. Those who are fertile are empowered in their lives and they receive honour in their communities.

In conclusion, rediscovering the ethics of Hannah, as an experience of curse and blessing, show that the narrative communicates the movement of life from curse to blessing. In this way Karanga women are challenged to open up possibilities for a blessing. The narrative of Hannah can be used as a resource for ethical reflection and insights.

Names and Naming

It came out in the discussions that the Karanga value names and naming their children. Naming is a rite that is celebrate, and the name that is given to a child must have a source and carry a meaning. The mention was that the name might be of a parent, or relative, names are given to remember relatives. The name might come from the experiences or expectations of the parents.

In the Hannah narrative, Hannah names her child Samuel meaning "asked for from the Lord". Also the name of Hannah means "grace or gracious" suggesting the grace of God that she was to receive. This shows that the names in Hannah's context also were given with a meaning of life experiences. This is similar to Karanga, but the concept of naming in Hannah

as a text, can continue to work as a paradigm and influence further, the Karanga to continue giving their children names that have good religious meanings.

4.3 Theology of the Song of Hannah

We discovered through this dissertation that the song of Hannah is very similar indeed to the song of David in 2 Samuel 22. This similarity was explained by Polzin (1989:26-34) who suggests that the songs must have originated from the same author, namely the Deuteronomistic historian. This author emphasises in his theology that Yahweh is the only God and that He is all powerful. Yahweh is depicted as a God who gives victory to his people. The similarity is explained that the song of Hannah was copied from that of David. This suggestion comes from the understanding that the text of Hannah was written in the 6th century BC during the exile to try and explain the hopeless situation of the Jews in exile. The Deuteronomistic historian writes a story to explain the suffering of the Jews and that there was hope that if they obeyed God, He would redeem them from the exile. The song is written as to exemplify the celebration of the Jews that will come after redemption. The theme of the song is victory, redemption and happiness that come through the power of God. All this theology is embedded in the story of the barrenness of Hannah.

Polzin (1989:26-34) shows that both hymns sing from the context of victory, and the themes of the hymns are defeat, enemies and creation, Fertility and childbirth are also included as important aspects worth singing for. It seems that the culture of Israelite way of thanking was that of singing. The Psalms are full of thanksgiving hymns that were sung for different purposes in the Israelite context, as a way of thanking God. Secondly, victory was an important aspect of Israelite life. An enemy was someone that one had to guard against and

rejoice over his defeat. Expressions about this kind of life are clear in the history of Israel stories. In the case of Hannah she sang the song of rejoicing when she had a child. The song was her expression of victory and empowerment. God's providence for powerless people is expressed in the song. God's power transforms the marginalised. The despised member of society becomes a vessel of the power of God. She sings a song of praise and she tells how she has been uplifted, "my strength exults in the Lord" (1Sam 2:1).

The song is also formative for the Karanga in the sense that the Karanga do not sing songs of praise when they get a child. They do not have a culture of singing thanksgiving hymns. They have their own way of expressing their thanks. This is done through private prayer or some private worship of the ancestors as a way of thanking them. The women who responded to the relevant interview question, mentioned that women sometimes forget to give thanks. The song also helps to acknowledge that fertility is an important attribute for which it is worth thanking God.

4.4 Sacrifice and prayer

In the text of Hannah, sacrifice and prayer are used as vehicles that move a woman from barrenness to fertility, from curse to blessing. The power of God gives her victory. Samuel's birth is the answer to prayer and the cause to sacrifice. Samuel is born as an example of the power of God. The birth of Samuel is an answer to the plea of Hannah and it comes as transformation. The question of Hannah's plea was rooted in the need for a child and it was answered by the birth of Samuel. Through prayer Hannah was transformed from being marginalised to being honoured. The obedience and hope of Hannah allows her to receive her answer (Klein 2000:91).

Hannah's sacrifice showed her independence and resourcefulness (Klein 2000: 91). She was independent from her husband and she did her sacrifice alone. She was resourceful in the items for sacrifice and Hannah did not ask her husband to make the collection for her. She made a vow that showed her social responsibility (Klein 200:91). Hannah felt that she was also a social being worth making her own vow that carried with it a social service or responsibility to the community on the part of her son to serve as a Nazarite.

5. Conclusion

Some scholars would suggest that the Hannah narrative is a text that grapples with the question of theodicy during the time when the Jews were in exile, as suggested in Chapter Two. Others say the text is meant to refer to the beginning of the kingship in Israel. This dissertation suggested through its investigation that the text of (1 Samuel 1:1-2:10) essentially remains a religious text that may be used theologically to address the issues of fertility and barrenness amongst readers through all ages. Secondly, the text may also be used as paradigm that illuminates, initiates change of people's perceptions of barrenness and fertility in a powerful way.

In the text of Hannah, we read about human nature and how it governed the social aspect of the people in the text. We also learned about the religious aspect of human life, how it governed the thinking of the people concerned. Questions like: Who is God? are addressed through the song of Hannah. In the text we also experienced the existence of evil and good as forces that govern human life.

During my reading of the story of Hannah with Karanga women, some of these women asked a question about human suffering being experienced in the text. They questioned why God allows his faithful ones to suffer so long and where God was during the times of suffering. Furthermore the women also asked questions about why God permits them to suffer. "Why does God allow us to suffer?" (uttered as a cry by a barren woman during our interview).

The text of Hannah was informative on how the problem of barrenness could affect a woman. In its narrative form, the narrator was able to make the women experience the progression of themes that help them to see the effects of barrenness on a family and on an individual. The story starts with the theme of a very religious family that worships and eats together. The narrative progresses to the theme of conflict in the family when the second wife taunts the barren wife. This is done mostly during the sacrificial time of the family. When the time of eating and celebration comes, Hannah would receive only her portion from her husband, while Penninah would receive portions for her children. This experience gives Hannah a most torrid time during the taunts of Penninah. The conflicts set a stage for Hannah to pray. The prayer carries with it a vow and it is the answer to the prayer that empowers Hannah to stand up, and she wants to thank God. Fertility is given here as a source of empowerment. Fertility gives Hannah the courage to plan her own sacrifice and also the courage to stand up against her husband's plan.

It is also enriching to see how narrative is understood and used by Africans. Africans value narrative in their dialogue. They learn a great deal through stories of other people, and they use a story to identify and relate their lives to it. Narrative is a way of speaking that is very effective. Africans are taught through narratives, idioms, proverbs and tales.

The Karanga women, who read this story for the interviews, were able to understand it very clearly because of its narrative form. They enjoyed the story and were able to follow the progressions. Narrative is a very effective way of informing and teaching in the Karanga language. The women were able to associate themselves with Hannah and were able to identify with her barren situation. The text was more than a narrative, but also a religious text that shows God's intervention in human life. As a result the women were able to read the text and accord it its religious value.

Firstly, I would like to contribute to present scholarship, namely that it is important to use socio-rhetorical reading of the story of Hannah in teachings and preaching in order to find a more engaging way of using the text. This method enables the reader to look at different topics and characters in the narrative from which women can learn a lot. An examination of the social and cultural context of Hannah can help to speak to other cultures that are similar. The method could also be used to help the women see beyond Hannah that there is God who cares for those in need and that God manifests his power through other human beings.

Secondly, that narrative may also be used to help barren women to recognise the transforming power of God; that God has the power to curse and to bless and that God cares for the marginalised. Birch (1991: 51-52) shows that Old Testament narratives can still be used to tell stories that can be formative to other people. Story-telling has been a significant way of communication in the Old Testament. This can still be used as a tool to speak to communities that value story-telling like that of the Karanga. The Old Testament narratives disclose a reality that unfolds the relation to God. The community in these stories understands that they had an encounter with God which transformed them. Some of these stories seek to

affect the same transforming power to the reader (1991:56). The narrative of Hannah can have a positive transforming power on Karanga women's perspective of barrenness and fertility. This transforming power can help them to see their situation differently.

Thirdly, this dissertation made it clear that barrenness is a problem that affects only women, and that in most cases it is women who seek to resolve it. Barrenness is used in different communities and cultures to marginalise women. In Zimbabwe it has become one of the causes of death through stress and also as a cause of the spread of HIV and Aids. Barrenness has become one of the major causes of divorce among Africans. Communities have been destabilised because of the divorces and the accusations of witchcraft that go along with barrenness. Loneliness has become a cause for concern, and most of it is caused by barrenness.

Fourthly, concern was also raised in this dissertation that even in cases where the family has children, people seem to prefer male children. The sex of a child is of great concern and a family without a son runs the risk of divorce. Having no male child is just as good as having no children at all, because sons are more important than daughters. It was also shared by other respondents that people should accept children as they come, without choosing whether it is a son or a daughter.

Fifthly, witchcraft remains an important cause of barrenness and the Karanga are quick to think of witchcraft as a cause of barrenness. They accuse each other and create enmity in families because of barrenness. Barrenness is seen as a great punishment or a curse and is interpreted as having been bewitched.

Sixthly, it was also proved through interviews that fertility is a blessing from God and that barrenness is a curse experienced by women through suffering, and rejection from the community and family. The bad experiences of barrenness make it a curse. The joy and fulfilment of purpose experienced by a fertile woman makes fertility a blessing. The discussions in this dissertation showed that fertility empowers a person and gives him or her satisfaction. Fertility was also discussed as a purpose for marriage among the Karanga and that barrenness could cause divorce in marriages. Fertility is a religious subject of concern in human life. Therefore, infertility can only be interpreted as a curse in the religious context, where fertility is seen as a God-given gift. For those who are not fertile, hope as well as trust in the power of God can play a vital role in addressing the problem of barrenness amongst women.

Topics for further Research:

- Theologically there is a need to study and understand the theology and ethics of procreation in a way that is relevant for Africa.
- To study the Forms and Symbols of marriage and sexuality in the Old Testament as paradigms for African marriages today.

ADDENDUM

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Introduction

I am a pastor in the Evangelical Lutheran church. Currently I am registered with the University of Stellenbosch in the Faculty of Theology. I am studying for a Doctor of Theology in Old Testament.

As part of my studies I am working on a research project that seeks to investigate the problems of barrenness and fertility in the light of blessing and curse as they are experienced by Karanga women. I chose to do my pilot project within the Karanga because I am also a Karanga, so I felt that it would be much easier for me to deal with people of my own tribe. Another reason for choosing the Karanga is that most of our church members are the Karanga people of Mberengwa and Masvingo. The purpose of my study is not only for writing a thesis but to seek to unveil and bring into light what women are going through and then seek to address this problem through our churches in a way that can help societies.

I also promise that whatever you are going to share is going to be held in confidence. No name will be used in reporting. I therefore ask you to be honest and comfortable in this interview.

Theme—1—

BIOGRAPHY

1. Age

Under 20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51 +

OFFICE USE

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2. Marital status

Single	Married	Divorced	Widowed

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3 Fertility

Barren	Perceived barren	Fertile	Unknown

OFFICE USE

4. Church / Religious affiliation

African Initiated Churches	Protestant	Catholic	Pentecostal	African Traditional Religion

5. Level of education

None	Primary	Secondary	Technical college	University

6. Economic status

Poor [<i>cannot afford regular meals</i>]	Middle-class [<i>can afford regular meals</i>]	Rich [<i>can afford more than just regular meals</i>]

Theme—2—

KARANGA CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING OF FERTILITY AND BARRENNESS

OFFICE USE

- 8 Who comprises a family in karanga culture? *Chinonzi mhuri pachikaranga ndivanani?*

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- 9 Is marriage important in your culture? Why? *Kuwanan tingati kwakakosha here patsika yenyu? Nemhaka yei?*

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- 10 Polygamy is one of the family traditions which is common among the Karanga people. What are the causes for it? *Nzanga ndeimwe tsika yemhuri dzinowanikwa pa vaKaranga. Ndezvipi zvikonzero zvokuita nzanga?*

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11 Is barrenness a threatening problem to a family? *Ko tingati kushaya mbereko idambudziko rinonetsa kumhuri herei?*

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12 What causes barrenness? *Ndezvipi zvikonzero zvokushaya mbereko?*

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13 How do people perceive barren women in Karanga society? *Ko maKaranga vanoti chinyi kana vachiona mukadzi asingabereki ?*

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- 14 There are Karanga nouns (*Ngomwa* and *Ruware*). To whom and for what meaning are these terms used? Make a comment on each one of them. *Panamavara echikaranga anoti Ngomwa uye Ruware anogaro shandiswa mukutaura. Mavara awa anoreva vanhu vakadini uye anorevei? Dudzira rimwe nerimwe rawo.*

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- 15 Please comment on this proverb: “*A dog can be regarded as old but a man remains fertile in his old age*”. *Chembere ndeyembwa yomurume ndibaba vevana.*

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- 16 “*A boyfriend does not own a child*”. What is the meaning of this idiom? *Gomba harina mwana Dimikira iri rinorevei?*

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- 17 Do you think that parents prefer a son to a daughter when bearing children? Why? *Ko kuti vanhu vangada chaizvo kusarudza kuva nomwana mukomana kanamusikana here pakubereka? Nemhaka yei?*

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- 18 What kind of a ritual is done in a family when a child is born? *Ndokupi kupira kunoitwa kana mwana achinge azvagwa ?*

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Theme—3—

Analysis of the Text – 1 Sam: 1-2

Text is made available and read in preferred version as identified:

KARANGA version of RSV (Newer)	R S V	KING JAMES	JERUSALEM BIBLE	

- 19 What do you think was (were) the problem(s) of the family in the text?
Chinyi changa chichinetsa mumhuri iri munyaya iyi sokuvona kwako?

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- 20 The text tells us that “God closed her womb” what do you think were the reasons for this. *Magwaro anotiudza kuti “Mwari vakapfiga chibereko chake”. Ko chinyi chingava chikonzero chaMwari kuita izvi?*

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- 21 Do you consider (fertility) having children as blessing from God, and (barrenness) as curse? *Ko ungati mbereko chikomborero cha Mwari uye kushaya mbereko kutukwa na Mwari here?*

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- 22 Who feels afflicted by barrenness and who takes the initiative to resolve it, in the text? Why? *Ko ndiani anoonadambudziko nokushayikwa kwebereko , uye ndiani anotsvaka kugadzirisa dambudziko iri munyaya yataverenga?*

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- 23 How is the problem of barrenness resolved in the Karanga society? *Ko pachikaranga dambudziko rembereko rinogadzirisva sei?*

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- 24 How do you resolve the problem of barrenness in your denomination? *Ko muchitendero chenyu munogadzirisa sei dambudziko rokushaya mbereko?*

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- 25 Tell a story of your personal experience of barrenness that you have either witnessed or experienced in your life and make a comment in the light of blessing or curse. *Imbotiudzawo zvawakamboona kana kunzwa ne zve nyaya dzokushaya mbereko, tipewo kanyaya kako ugodudzira uchishandisa shoko rokuti iropafadzo kana kuti uku kutukwa.*

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