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The word for "woman" in the Hebrew Scriptures has been a source of considerable grief for the feminine aspect of humanity for thousands of years. The traditional manner in which "woman" is introduced into the Old Testament of the Holy Bible has been anything but flattering or supportive. The second creation account of the Bible often referred to as the "Adam and Eve Story," is where the word for "woman" is first used. In the traditional Adam and Eve Story "woman" is referred to as being an after thought to "man." By a divine surgical procedure "woman" is built from one of man's ribs. Then, "woman" is led into disobeying God's command, and due to her own seductive ways, she supposedly talks her husband into also breaking God's command. God then curses the "woman" by making her live under the rule of her husband.

Until the last half of the twentieth century the feminine half of English, Christian marriage vows read, "To love, honor, and obey your husband." Marriage vows still read that way for many fundamentalist Christians. In Middle English the word "woman" is derived from the idea of being the "wife" of a "man," Anglo Saxon *wifman*, later *wimman*. The change in pronunciation from *wimman* to "woman" was partly caused by the pronunciation influence of the "*w*," in the first syllable, and the "ă" vowel sound of the second. However, in the plural, "women," the "*i*" sound remains.

The Middle English term "female" is no more flattering. In *Webster's 3rd International Unabridged Dictionary, © 1961*, the etymology for "female" appears, "**fe-male:** Middle English alteration (influenced by *male*)." The etymology of the first

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syllable **fe** is the Middle English *fee, fe, feoh,* Anglo Saxon *feoh:* cattle, money, property. Thus, "female" is equivalent to meaning, "property" of a "male." Even the Latin term for "female" evokes an analogous meaning, **fēmina:** a female. The first syllable, *fe,* is derived from the Greek *phero,* meaning, "to bear, to carry," Latin *fētus:* "bearing, bringing forth of young." The second syllable *mina* means, to be "smooth, hairless," (human females have less body hair than human males), as well as "a measure of money." Thus, Latin **fēmina** literally means, "to carry less hair," or "to bear money," "to bring forth young that are worth money." The Aramaic New Hebrew term for "female" is *n^eqébah*, which is derived from the verb *naqab*, meaning "to curse." According to *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, originally published in 1898, the gender of the names of instruments, utensils and parts of the body are "feminine" because they are all regarded as "subservient and subordinate."¹

The last two clauses of Genesis 3:¹⁶ traditionally read as follows: "yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you."²

For more than two thousand years this Biblical curse has plagued the feminine aspect of humanity in those cultures influenced by the Genesis 2:⁴ thru 3:²⁴ Story of Adam and Eve. However, the above translation is in error, and this error must be corrected before humanity can reach its full potential. A very important part of our human consciousness is buried beneath this error. This error causes human

¹ *GHG* pg. 392 §*122 m*.

² NRSV.

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consciousness, which relates to life through stories, to be divided at its most basic level, literally "male versus female," and figuratively "brute strength versus creative thought." Past and recent events in the human realm of reality speak volumes in regard to this division of human consciousness. How many wars have been waged by the cultures who have embraced the religions founded on the sacred text which essentially begins with the Story of Adam and Eve. This ancient story has come to be regarded as "the fall of man," but more so it has inspired the figurative and literal enslavement and domination of "woman." In both a literal and a figurative sense the erroneous translation and interpretation of the Hebrew Genesis 2:⁴ thru 3:²⁴ narrative must be corrected. Until this ancient Hebrew narrative is told correctly and understood fully, human consciousness will remain divided and at war.

Not until the last half of the twentieth century has it been possible to correct this translation and interpretation error. Only recently has a wealth of information been compiled and published on the ancient Canaanite Hebrew dialect in which Genesis 2:⁴ thru 3:²⁴ was written. It is the intent of this study to reveal the literal and metaphorical root of the Hebrew feminine noun for "woman."