

Language of women's relationships to men in Genesis 29-31

shifchah, "maid-servant"

Laban gave his **maid-servant** Zilpah to his daughter Leah to be her **maid-servant** (29.24; cf. 35.26)

(Laban gave his **maid-servant** Bilhah to his daughter Rachel to be her **maid-servant**. (29.29; cf. 35.25)

Then Leah's **maid-servant** Zilpah bore Jacob a son. (30.10)

Leah's **maid-servant** Zilpah bore Jacob a second son. (30.12)

Leah said, "God has given me my hire because I gave my **maid-servant** to my man"; so she named him Issachar. (30.18)

Thus the man grew exceedingly rich, and had large flocks, and male and **female slaves**, and camels and donkeys. (30.43)

[As Hagar, 16.1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, translated in NRSV as "slave-girl"]

'ishshah, "woman" [traditionally as "wife"]

Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give me my **woman** that I may go in to her, for my time is completed." (29.21)

Jacob did so, and completed her week; then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel as a **woman**. (29.28)

So she gave him her **maid-servant** Bilhah as a **woman**; and Jacob went in to her. (30.4)

When Leah saw that she had ceased bearing children, she took her **maid-servant** Zilpah and gave her to Jacob as a **woman**. (30.9)

*[cf. 16.3: Sarai, Abram's **woman**, took Hagar the Egyptian, her **slave-girl**, and gave her to her husband Abram as a **woman**.]*

Give me my **women** and my children for whom I have served you, and let me go; for you know very well the service I have given you." (30.26)

So Jacob arose, and set his children and his **women** on camels... (31.17)

And she said to her father, "Let not my lord be angry that I cannot rise before you, for the way of **women** is upon me." So he searched, but did not find the household gods. (31.35)

If you ill-treat my daughters, or if you take **women** in addition to my daughters, though no one else is with us, remember that God is witness between you and me." (31.50)

Compare pilegesh, "secondary woman" [traditionally as "concubine"] of 37x in MT, 22x in DH as function of monarchy: Judges 19-20; 2 Samuel 3.7; 5.13; 15.16; 16.21-22; 19.6; 20.3; 21.11; 1 Kings 11.3]

Moreover, [Abraham's brother Nahor's] **secondary woman**, whose name was Reumah, bore Tebah, Gaham, Tahash, and Maacah. (22.24)

But to the sons of his **secondary women** Abraham gave gifts, while he was still living, and he sent them away from his son Isaac, eastward to the east country. (25.6)

While Israel lived in that land, Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's **secondary woman**; and Israel heard of it. (35.22)

Timna was a **secondary woman** of Eliphaz, Esau's son; she bore Amalek to Eliphaz. (36.12)