



Where Is Her Voice? The Biblical Aspect of Women in Leadership Positions

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10.1 Introduction

In areas where society is nurtured, like in education, a woman's leadership is paramount in shaping minds. Still, it is recorded that there are very few women leaders in higher education institutions in Kenya. According to Nkomo and Ngambi (2018), only four women have served as vice chancellors in public universities out of the thirty-two nationally. This brings to light that women are underrepresented in university leadership in Kenya. With this assertion made, women can therefore be left out of the process of education of societies' members, which may give a male-biased perspective regarding the general *zeitgeist* of culture. Women in higher education careers in Kenya are discriminated against, work in unfriendly environments and face sexual harassment and resistance, among other challenges (Onsongo, 2011). Women are therefore forced to work extra hard to prove their capabilities (Bunyi, 2018).

Despite the fact that a woman's voice is taken for granted due to social habits, their voices still inspire progress in society when they get the chance to speak up (Onsumbah, 2011). Although women have natural attributes of empathy, compassion, compromise, and intuition, they still shy off from leadership positions (Nkomo & Ngambi, 2018). Women are said to be more attuned to spiritual awareness, leading them to seek spiritual guidance in times of difficulty (Wambura, 2017). There are several women leaders within the Bible whose voices impacted the prophetic path to the salvation brought to being by Jesus. Against all odds, they stood firm in a male-dominated community. Modern-day women leaders can learn and be inspired by such biblical accounts. This chapter seeks to utilize three Biblical women;

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Miriam, Deborah, and Mary (the mother of Jesus), who stand as symbols of female strength in actualizing holistic societal development. Considering this, we also seek to draw parallels to their ability and potential to transform the education sector and overall society. Our chapter analyses critical events associated with each of the women of the Bible and the songs they sang to represent their various messages as society representatives. Each woman lived at a different time, and each had varied capacities in their society, but still was regarded as a significant figure in leadership within the Christian faith.

We actualize our intent in this chapter by using literary criticism and hermeneutical and poetic analysis of the songs of the proponents in our discussion. By doing so, we intend to contextualize the songs of Miriam, Deborah, and Mary and shed light on how they represent critical aspects of women's leadership in society. Our methodology (1) indicates and unearths the content of the songs by observing the literary texts and (2) brings a deeper understanding of the texts' nature and the characters in the discussion by utilizing literary criticism of the songs.

10.1.1 Literary Criticism

Literary criticism analyses the text as it stands, which includes structural analyses, which deal with the "purest" form of textual analysis as it deals with the external factors to the text itself (Schneiders, 1999, p. 125). Literary criticism engages the reader in its production of the meaning from the text and how it performs this function efficiently or inefficiently (Schneiders, 1999). Finally, literary criticism discerns the importance of the text, which leads to hermeneutic interpretation (Schneiders, 1999).

10.2 Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics implies speaking translation and explanation. Hermeneutics focuses on the moment of understanding the complete sense of the text, which involves the questions asked and integration of the answers to the questions with the methodological consideration (Ackerman, 2002).

10.3 Poetic Analysis

The poetic analysis deals with the text in its final form as a literary entity either in its original language or translation. Such as the songs (poems) delivered by our chosen proponents within this chapter.

10.4 Are There Any Lessons That a Woman Leader Can Learn From Miriam?

Miriam was the first woman in the Bible to be called a prophetess (Anati, 2005). She was Moses and Aaron's elder sister and the offspring of the Jewish slaves' leader Amram and mother Jochebed. At the time of her birth in the land of Goshen, Pharaoh Pepi exercised his unjustly rule against the Hebrew people in Egypt. According to Anati (2016), Pharaoh Pepi, who is said to have reigned between the twenty-fourth and twenty-first century BC, oppressed the Israelites. During his reign, Pharaoh ordered that every newborn male Hebrew male be tossed into the River Nile (Anati, 2016). Miriam prophesied that her mother would bear a child who would lead Israel to salvation. (Anati, 2016). This prophecy came to pass when Moses was born.

Miriam portrayed leadership precociously when she challenged her father's decision to divorce her mother. As a Hebrew slaves' leader, Amram had asked all the Hebrew slaves to divorce their wives and throw their firstborn sons into the Nile to end Israel's lineage. According to Miriam, her father's decision to divorce his wife was worse than following the order to kill the Hebrew firstborns. She said: "Pharaoh decreed that only firstborn sons would die, you decreed both girls and boys would never be conceived: you decreed death for this world and the world to come" (Zinkuratire & Colacrai, 1999).

The initiative and conviction of Miriam persuaded her father to consider remarriage with Jochebed, Miriam's mother. Moses was born shortly after this reunion, and thus, the vision of salvation was realized through this. Miriam's revolutionary awareness led her to spearhead the Hebrew slaves' revolt and led the opposition against Pharaoh. She is considered the first opposition against a Pharaoh by refusing to kill Hebrew's firstborn sons when she was a young midwife.

10.5 The Significance of the Song of Miriam (Exodus 15:1-21)

The book of Exodus gives an account of the Israelites deliverance from slavery. The reports contain many historical events, and Miriam is the only woman protagonist who promotes the road to salvation in the Promised Land. However, Miriam, who held a prominent position in Israel, joined the men in a victory song after bearing witness to the drowning of their Egyptian captors in the Red Sea. This song is titled the "Song of the Sea" as recorded in twenty-eight verses of Exodus Chap. 15. Miriam led the women in singing the song in two stanzas:

Miriam, the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a drum in her hand, and all women went out after her with drums and dances. Miriam spoke up to them: Sing to God for He overcame the arrogant, the horse with its rider, He hurled them into the sea. (Exodus 15: 20-21).

10.6 Literary Analysis of the Song of Miriam

Miriam's song, Exodus 15:20-21, contextualizes the Hebrew crossing the Red Sea (Exodus 14:1-15:21), includes Miriam's song (Exodus 15:20-21). It is depicted within part of one of the Book of Exodus, Exodus 1:1-15:21, while immediately after the song of Miriam, in part two of Exodus, Moses leads the Israelites from the Red Sea to Mara (Exodus 15:22-18:12). Part three deals with the Israelites and covenant with God at Mount Sinai and the Law (Exodus 19:1-40:38).

Many scholars have attested that the Song of Miriam is the most ancient poetic piece in the Old Testament because of the evidence available in several ancient manuscripts like Dead Sea Scroll fragments 4Q365, the Masoretic Text (M.T.), the Septuagint (LXX) (JANZEN, 1992), and Philo of Alexandria in his translation of Exodus 15 in *De Vita Conmplativa* 87-88 (Tervanotko, 1993) in which he describes Miriam's song.

Miriam's song is a poem with an ancient poetic structure of ab, ac nature. Its characteristics include repetitive parallelism, mixed meter, unity of the pattern (Exodus 15:1b and 21), and the symmetry of strophic structure (Cross & Freedman, 1955). In antiquity, the opening verse served as the title: "*And Miriam sang to them, "Sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously. The horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea."* (Exodus 15:21). The song moves from the first person to second person and third person. The first singer in the body of the song, "I will sing"; the second person is "You"; and the third person is "Miriam sang to them." The second person is plural imperative in the women's responsive exhortation "You," "Sing to the Lord." The second person is addressed to God. The third person describes the Egyptians' chase after the Israelites and their watery deaths. The Canaanites' trembling responses and an embedded monolog in the first-person plural conjures the arrogant Egyptians, imagined anticipatory of victory (Tzoref, 2020).

10.7 Prophetess Miriam

Prophets are visionary people who see the world differently through inspiration. As a prophetess, Miriam was considered God's prophetess. The name "Miriam" is derived from the Egyptian *Mara*, which means "satisfied," "beautiful," or *Meri* "loved" or with the Canaanite root *own* that means exalted one (Zinkuratire & Colacrai, 1999). The Bible states that "Miriam, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand, led the women dancing after her with tambourines" (Exodus 15: 21a).

Miriam's song reflects ancient customs where women went out in a group to meet the warriors on their victorious return from the battle. They sang songs of victory and triumphed. The Old Testament records several accounts where women went out to celebrate in music and dance the battle victories (Zinkuratire & Colacrai, 1999). The songs were accompanied by hand drums and tambourines (Goitein, 1988). Such examples include Jephthah's daughter who came from the house with dance at her father's victory over the Ammonites (Judges 11:34); Israel's women celebrated David and Saul for their victories over the Philistines (1 Sam 18:5-7);

Deborah sang Jael's victory over Sisera, the Canaanite general army commander in her song with Barak (Judges 5:1, 8); Jeremiah's symbol of salvation to the survivors of the destroyed province of Judah and the city of Jerusalem was personified through imagery of the Song of Miriam and the beating drums. Judith celebrates the defeat of Holofernes, the Assyrian General War commander whose head she beheaded (Judith 15:12-13).

Septuagint uses the verb *choros* to describe how Miriam led the choruses. The verb *choros* literary means "to begin," to act as a leader," "to imitate" (Newsom et al., 2012). "And led them in the refrain" (*Exodus 15:21a*) implies that there were two choruses by the Red Sea; Moses led one and Miriam the other. Tervantko (1993) observes that several manuscripts maintained the song of Miriam, and the manuscript sources probably came from the exact text, which implies that Miriam did not only sing a chorus but participated fully in the song as sang in Exodus 15.

As a chorus leader, Miriam invited the women to join her sing the hymn and thanksgiving to God for victory over the Egyptians. They joined in songs of triumph and praise for the instant salvation the Israelites experienced and hoped for the ultimate redemption. Stobe singles Miriam out for her musical and spiritual leadership. She observes that Miriam participated in the triad leadership of Moses, Aaron, and herself as national leaders and patriotic (Cohen, 2020). Prophet Micah recognizes Miriam in the triad leadership. "I rescued you from Egypt, where you were slaves. I sent Moses, Aaron and Miriam to be your leaders" (*Micah 6:4*). Miriam, therefore, receives the same respect as Moses and Aaron as a leader.

Where is her voice? Perhaps because of patriarchy, Miriam's voice is not heard in the song and chorus.

10.8 Contemporary Lessons From Miriam's Song

For women in Kenya who hold positions in the institutions of higher learning, adding the beauty that sometimes lacks in male-dominated leadership is required. Prof Olive Mugenda, the former Kenyatta University Vice Chancellor, knows this too well. While sharing her experience at a Forum for Africa Women Vice Chancellors (FAWoVC) workshop, she said:

I began my 10-year term as Kenyatta University (K.U.) vice-chancellor by doing small things like planting flowers. The surrounding community was angry and wanted to know why they had been given a vice-chancellor who was only interested in planting flowers.

Professor Mugenda knew the importance of students studying in a clean environment. The small beautiful beginning made her oversee mega projects like a business center, amphitheater, hospital, and funeral home for the community. The enrollment of the students also rose tremendously, from 15,000 to more than 70,000 (Nakayiwa et al., 2020). Women leaders should look out for what they need to do differently to change their institutions.

10.8.1 What Is the Meaning of Deborah's Song?

There are three Deborah's mentioned in the Bible. The first one was a nurse who accompanied Rebekah from Bethel to her matrimonial home around B.C. 2023. This Deborah died at a great age and was buried under the oak tree called Allon Bacuth (oak of weeping) (Usher, 2012). The second Deborah is found in the Book of Tobit. She was the grandmother of Tobit (NEB translation, and according to the translation of Sinaiticus); this Deborah was the great grandmother of Tobit (Tobit 1:8) (Perrin, 2015). The third Deborah was the fourth judge and a prophetess of Israel (Judges 4-5).

Our study focuses on Deborah, the judge, wife, mother, poet, and prophetess. Deborah was a prophetess of the Lord, the fourth judge of Israel, and the only female judge to be mentioned in the book of Judges (Osborne, 2013). As a wife of Lappidoth, Deborah was chosen by God to serve as the mother of Israel during difficult times of upheaval. She served during twenty-year oppression imposed on Israel by Jabin, the king of Canaan. Under the "Palm of Deborah," Deborah reclaimed freedom for the Israelites and that Israel subsequently enjoyed peace for forty years.

Deborah was a symbol of authority, and her public presence was regarded as a representation of God's divine nature. In many ways, Deborah serves as the prime exemplar of women aspiring to claim a vital public voice. Deborah's impactful story inspired Schroeder to surmount that hers was a story that possessed disruptive potential (Schroeder, 2014). From our studies inquisition, we seek to utilize this disruptive potential to open us to discussing women's voice in leadership and its advantages. In Judges 4-5, the song of Deborah represents a piece of the narrative of Israel's history through music. Within our discussion, we will embark on an understanding of the literary meaning apparent from the reading of Deborah's song.

Prophetess Deborah sent a prophetic message to Barak directing him to organize an army to fight against the Canaanite oppressors (Schroeder, 2014). Barak refused to do so without Deborah. Deborah interpreted Barak's refusal as placing the glory of the victory in the hands of a woman, which was against the status quo. Deborah finally accompanied Barak to battle, and God granted the Israelite's victory as expressed in the "Palm of Deborah," a song she composed and sang together with Barak. There are numerous character traits that Deborah possessed that could inspire women leaders. Deborah was courageous, a feature that made her lead the Israelites at a difficult time. She obeyed God's calling and did not let the prevailing patriarchal circumstances deter her from performing her role as a leader.

Deborah's name is identified by the bee and the word *database*, which means word, speaking, speech, or thing (Ubong, 2021). The bee symbolically represents and is associated with "a speaker," concerning the audible buzzing sound synonymous with it when in flight. Although bees are not the only insects that buzz, their symbolic relation to their productivity of honey distinguishes them. This is significant in the sense that bees make sweet honey that humans relish. Bee's buzz, speak, have a colony, care for offspring, and are armed to sting enemies. We link Deborah's

image with the queen bee who brought strength to her colony (Israel) by utilizing the available resources present in the individual members who she refers to in her.

In this account of Deborah, honey, milk, and curds are used symbolically. In Exodus 3:8, God promised the Israelites abundance, commonly represented in the symbolic imagery of milk and honey. Both give nutritional value, milk to infants and honey to adults. Furthermore, honey is associated with sweetness related to the bee, and therefore, Deborah's words and judgment are linked with the sweetness of honey. We are told that: "...honey and curds and sheep and cheese from the herd, for David and the people with him to eat," for they said "The people are hungry and weary and thirsty in the wilderness." (2 Samuel 17:29). Prophet Isaiah prophesized concerning the Messiah in relation to honey, milk, and curds and stated that, "he will eat cheese and honey until he knows how to reject evil and choose good" (Isaiah 7:15).

Within similar symbolism, the curd takes milk and may represent a form of cheese. Cowell in the older times in the Mediterranean regions. Honey means delight and joy, according to the Bible. It also symbolizes good health and prosperity. Both are also symbolic of refusing evil and selecting the sacred and suitable for life. Later in the Bible, these symbols change from delight to scarcity to judgment (in Deborah's case). The song of Deborah in itself bears tremendous significance.

10.9 Symbolism in the Palm of Deborah

Triumph is a central theme of Christian religiosity, and therefore, symbols of victory serve to relay its corresponding message. When Jesus rode upon a donkey, which symbolizes peace, the crowd also met him with waving palm leaves, symbolizing triumph. The symbolic meaning of the palm stands in reverence as it represents peace and triumph to the people of the Middle East. As we focus on the symbolism of the "palm" and apply it to gender dynamics and power, the palm of Deborah, a renowned prophetess and judge, is seen to be different from other more masculine symbols of authority and influence because only she has a name adorned with the "palm." We are told that: "She held court under the Palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites went up to her to have their disputes decided." (Judges 4:5).

This tag of the palm of Deborah not only recognizes where she conducted her official duty but also represented her historical function in preparing the way for Christianity. We can declare that her name gives her much reverence as the palm is also attributed to Miriam, Mary, and Fatima, the daughter of Mohammed. We introduced Deborah as a Judge!

10.10 Deborah the Judge

Deborah, a revered prophetess, is seen as a representative of the divine God rather than just an official in a legal tribunal. God's works through Deborah liberated the Israelites from the oppressive force of the Canaanites. Deborah's leadership ability

was seen to emanate from her position as God's mouthpiece, thus providing her with the fortitude needed to overcome their adversaries. While Israel enjoyed the shade of Deborah's Palm, her inspiring leadership attracted support from members of neighboring communities. For instance, Heber the Kenite had left the main body of his tribe south (lib) at the "terebinth" (for oak) of *Zaananim* (of Judges 19:30). The leadership is also reiterated in the potent verse about the fall of Sisera at the hands of Jael, who was a member of the tribe. But Deborah's leadership was particularly significant.

10.11 Deborah's Team Leadership

The collaboration between Deborah and Barak exemplifies a complementary effort made by a capable woman and her capable male counterpart in service. In 1833, an African American female political writer on slavery, racism, and women's rights used biblical women to justify her call to public oratory: She asked "What if I am a woman, isn't the God of ancient times the same God of these modern days? Did he not raise Deborah to be a mother and a judge in Israel?" Ann Howard Shaw observed that a female leader who has a mother's heart could root out injustice, ensuring protection and well-being for all people under her charge.

Judge Deborah is proof that a nation afflicted with injustice and corruption can benefit from a bit of mothering. When leadership is distilled and refined practicality, the resulting attributes are similar to that of a mother and raising her offspring. Deborah's maternal inclinations and corresponding instincts added to her already outstanding repertoire of ability to become a revered Judge of Israel. As a prophetess and a judge, Deborah was and still is a potent symbol of female authority.

Deborah's story shows the high level of achievements attained by a woman in the Old Testament context. In her time, gender interactions of Israel and the areas of the Middle East were mainly patriarchal. The overcoming of her circumstances displayed the strength one must have to be a good leader. Deborah held high office, and therefore, she set the stage for other women to establish themselves into positions of influence where their voices can be felt in society, politics, church, and other institutions.

10.12 Social-Cultural Analysis of the Song of Deborah (Judges 5:1-31)

After God granted victory to Israelites, Deborah and Barak composed a song giving an account of the happenings. The song has thirty-one verses where most of the verses are dedicated to the God of Israel. Deborah gave God credit after the victory. She did not go thumping her chest and boasting about her excellent leadership skills. She appeals:

Listen, you kings! Pay attention, you rulers! I will sing and play music to Israel's God, the LORD. LORD, when you left the mountains of Seir, when you came out of the region of Edom, the earth shook, and rain fell from the sky. Yes, water poured down from the clouds. Before the LORD of Sinai, the mountains quaked before the LORD, the God of Israel. (Judges 5:3-5)

In the song, Deborah appreciates the men who volunteered to go to fight with her. They ritually prepared themselves for the war. She was aware that it was not possible to win the battle without teamwork. Any woman leader who desires to excel in their leadership endeavors must consider working with a willing team and always remember to acknowledge their contribution. Deborah sings:

My heart is with the commanders of Israel, with the people who gladly volunteered. Praise the LORD! Tell of¹ it, you that ride on white donkeys, sitting on saddles, and you that must walk wherever you go. (Judges 5:9-10)

Deborah also acknowledged the role of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite. Who courageously managed to kill Sisera alone by crushing his skull with a tent peg. She sang:

The most fortunate of women is Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite— the most profitable women who live in tents. Sisera asked for water, but she gave him milk; she brought him cream in a beautiful bowl. She took a tent peg in one hand, a worker's hammer in the other; she struck Sisera and crushed his skull; she pierced him through the head. He sank to his knees, fell, and lay still at her feet. At her feet, he dropped to his knees and fell; he fell to the ground, dead. (Judges 5: 24-27)

Despite the violent expression depicted in the text regarding Jael, the triumph is still represented by the acceptance of the violent and aggressive perspective of the times. Therefore, this account can describe women's solidarity and the significant levels women can soar to when they work in harmony. Women are each other's strength and will collectively bring forth great success in their capacities, even in situations that may be of difficult compromise.

Deborah also sings about Sisera's mother's lament when her son is delayed in returning from the battle. Since Sisera was a mighty commander, his mother hoped to win the war and return safely. Despite the consolation from her wisest friends, this was not the case since Sisera perished in the hands of a woman. We are told:

Sisera's mother looked out of the window; she gazed from behind the lattice. "Why is his chariot so late in coming?" she asked. Why are his horses so slow to return? Her wisest friends answered her, and she told herself over and over "They are only finding things to capture and divide, a woman or two for every soldier, rich cloth for Sisera, and embroidered pieces for the neck of the queen." So may all your enemies die like that, O LORD, but may your friends shine like the rising sun! (Judges 5: 28-31).

Any time people go to the battlefield, women are greatly affected. They are raped and kidnapped; Sisera's mother consoles that her son has delayed because he is looking for things to capture. "*They are only finding things to capture and divide, a*

woman or two for every soldier...” This utterance shows that women are treated as objects. Women leaders understand the pain that their counterparts go through. They know the pain of losing a battle because it directly affects them. The women also enjoy victories in equal measures. The concluding verse sums it all; “*And there was peace in the land for forty years.*” There are modern insights for us in Deborah’s Psalm.

10.13 Contemporary Lessons from Deborah’ Song

Deborah realized that she could not win the battle alone. Sisera’s army was powerful, and therefore, Deborah needed strong men to go to the battlefield. Although she did not fight, she accompanied the men to the battlefield. Since she was the vision carrier, Barak requested her to be present. The men fought, but the victory was credited to Jael, an interdependent interaction that depicts the need for complementary interaction between male and female associations. If considered in terms of tertiary education, Women leaders, especially those in the higher institutions of learning, may be forced to go the extra mile to be accepted as university executives.

Prof. Walingo, the first female Vice Chancellor of Maasai Mara University, attested to this. Soon after taking office, Walingo was confronted by older men from the Maasai community who could not believe that a woman could be a Vice Chancellor (V.C.). They wanted to see a male V.C. They were only convinced when Walingo explained how she managed to sail through the tedious recruitment process. According to Prof. Walingo, a woman leader has to work hard to win the leading people to make her voice heard. She says: “I knew I had to win their (Maasai elders) confidence that a woman could lead a university. And the only way I was to do that was to let my hard work do the talking.” Another woman of interest to us is Mary, Jesus’ mother.

10.14 Mary’s Magnificat

Mary is the most acknowledged and respected woman in the Biblical and Quranic Holy Scriptures. She is celebrated because of giving birth to Jesus the Messiah. Mary gave birth to Jesus in a miraculous way. She can be described as a woman of immense faith, strength, and courage. When the angel revealed to her that she would give birth to a child, she was afraid. However, she trusted God’s word and was sure that God would guide her through her life. She Proclaimed:

I am the Lord's servant, ... "May your word to me be fulfilled. (Luke 1:38).

Being the mother of Jesus accorded Mary the most incredible honor. With humility, Mary accepted God’s will and willingly accepted her role as the savior’s mother. Mary’s office is the highest office that a woman can hold. She was entrusted with

saving the whole world, and any mess could result in a disaster. Sometimes, the role of women leaders is under-rated. They have to work hard for their voice to be heard.

Another lesson that women can learn from Mary is that she trusted God with all her heart. Instead of complaining about the difficult task bestowed on her, Mary chooses to give praises to God. In her song of praise, Mary glorifies God for being mindful of the humble. She also acknowledges the mighty hand of God.

Mary had immense knowledge of the Bible, and she quoted several verses in her talk. She also pondered on the messages she received before acting on them. Mary took time to contemplate the great things that were happening in her life. Those quiet moments of self-reflection helped her to have a deeper relationship with God. The closing line of Mary's story is that

Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. (Luke 2:19).

Mary finds deep meaning in her life, as is expressed very delicately in a well-structured song. Mary uses her voice as being blessed to mother, the Messiah. In this account, Mary publicly declares about her experience. She, like the psalmists, exercises her expression of her witness of God. She rejoices because God has done great things for her. Mary makes an attempt to unify all those of faith to rejoice with her because the salvation that she was a witness to is the salvation of the universal church. Mary stands with her people in their experience of the past, present, and future.

Mary acknowledges that her song and consequently her life was for the use of the God whom she says is His handmaiden.

All generations will call me blessed. (Luke 1:48b).

It is the birth of Jesus that brought honor to Mary. In the connection of all generations, the Magnificat foreshadows Hanna's praise of the Lord in the Book of first Samuel with numerous structural and thematic similarities with Mary's Magnificat (cf. 1 Samuel 2:1-10).

The Magnificat: Mary's Song of Praise

My soul magnifies the Lord,^{47b} and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior;⁴⁸ for he as looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed;⁴⁹ for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and^holy is his name.⁵⁰ And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.⁵¹ he has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts;⁵² he has brought down the mighty from their thrones^l and exalted those of humble estate;⁵³ he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty.⁵⁴ He has helped^p his servant Israel,^q in remembrance of his mercy,⁵⁵ as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and his offspring forever.

The Magnificat is a poem, canticle, and is also referred to as the song of Mary. Its title is derived from the incipit of the Latin version. Magnificat is found within Luke's account of the birth of Jesus, which covers from Luke 1:5 -2:52. The infancy narrative is divided into several sections beginning with the visit to Mary by the

Angel Gabriel, followed by Mary's visit to Elizabeth, the birth of John the Baptist, and connected to the rest of the infancy narrative. The Magnificat is Mary's song in response to Elizabeth, who acknowledged Mary's greeting. Elizabeth observed

For the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears the infant inside of me leaped for joy. (Luke 1: 44).

It is after this that Mary bursts into her song.

This song is connected to the nativity narrative, John the Baptist's birth, and the canticle of Zechariah. Jesus' and the visitation by the shepherds upon hearing the angel's praise of God. The birth narrative ends with Jesus Mary and Joseph's visit to the temple in Jerusalem. Jesus remains at the temple, and his parents find him after three days. The account closes with Jesus' return to Nazareth, where he was obedient to his parents, and he grew up in "wisdom, age, and favor before God and people" (Luke 2:52). Mary's song is rich in meaning.

10.15 Literary Analysis of Mary's Song

Mary's proclamation of the greatness of the Lord is found in the words of redemption of the world, liberation of the oppressed. God is a savior, for there will be a reversal of positions, new universality, and joy. Mary (here) is the prototype of Jesus' Disciple. In her humble and low state, she rejoices in God, her savior. She says:

My soul proclaims the greatness of the lord. (Luke 1:46)

10.16 God My Savior

The word Jesus can be translated as God is my salvation. In this sense, salvation is a person. Jesus' mission inverted the status quo. Those in positions of power have been reduced, while the powerless are raised up. The hungry are filled with good things, the rich he has sent away empty.

According to Bailey, the language used in the Magnificat is similar to the Song of the Red Sea (Exodus15), adding that it provides the potential of a New Exodus. We utilize this assertion of a "new exodus" to guide our discussion on Mary's Magnificat and its functionality and profound ability to usher in the Gospel. This good news was to be delivered by the Messiah, Jesus Christ. This is elucidated and aided by this literary analysis unearths the revolutionary ideas that identify and describe Jesus' mission on earth. This assertion further suggests that Mary was the first witness of the Messiah, which is noted as early as Angel Gabriel's announcement of her bearing child.

Lastly, this literary interpretation can tie Mary's song with a certain renewal of faith as a mature society of Israel. This is because it would be significant to note that

the coming of Jesus marked universal paradigmatic shifts that revolutionized spiritual, social, religious, political aspects of people on a universal level. The message of Love of humankind and Love of all things became a manifest attribute of social structures as described in the stanzas of the Magnificat.

10.17 Mary, the Witness of the New Exodus

Mary represents the initial representation of how the symbolic salvation is represented by the coming of Jesus, her son. She further depicts that the change that will be affected by the Messiah will bring about change that would liberate all of humanity. In verse 48, Mary acknowledges that God took her humble status to exalt the generation to come. She further acknowledges the anticipated reality by saying that she will be called blessed because the Mighty One has done great things for her. Mary had an identity, a culture, a history, a background, a family, and she was proud of who she was. She then embraced the responsibility bestowed on her without giving excuses. She was also confident that through her, the lives of generations to come would be changed.

He has helped his servant Israel remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever and ever as he said to our fathers. (Luke 1:54-55).

Mary also conveyed revolutionary ideas in her song when she describes a general moral course, which she refers to as the death of pride. In verse 51, Mary says:

He has done a mighty deed with his arm: he has scattered the proud....

Furthermore, Mary also talks about a social revolution. “*He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted the humble.*” (Luke 1:52). This message shows that society exalts social status and economic status. However, authentic leadership comes from a person with a willing heart and is obedient to God. In her song, Mary also speaks of economic revolution in verse 53.

He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. (Luke 1:54).

This stanza depicts the economic position should not be a gauge of authentic leadership. As previously discussed, the connection between the Magnificat and the song of the sea can be looked at as a landmark in ushering in the new world order. Jesus, in this regard, is the symbol that renews the faith of humankind. Through this, we can interpret the words of Mary as descriptions of the work of Jesus Christ and his mission. This new Exodus is interwoven in a three-strand chord of ideas derived from Bailey’s research on Magnificat. These three ideas on a fundamental level sufficiently coherently organize Mary’s words and provide a sound reason to associate Jesus’ mission with the message of the Magnificat.

We also acknowledge Mary’s social environment may have influenced the lyrics; when she addresses injustice, inequality, and disregard for the fundamental worship

of God. The following themes are used in our literary analysis as sections: (1) Praise of God, (2) Lowliness-exaltation, and (3) salvation (Bailey 1998). We, therefore, look at the individual themes and how their lyrics represent the change anticipated by the New Exodus.

10.18 Praise of God

Mary reiterates the significance of praising God as the redeemer and savior of those who believe and honor him. It is important to note that this interdependent aspect of the Magnificat relates to the other corresponding themes to be looked at later. Therefore, it suggests that Mary acknowledges praise as a prerequisite before one can share in the salvation of God. Mary praises God, who has done great things for her and the community of Israel. She praises:

*My soul magnifies you;
And holy is his name;
And his mercy is from generation to generation to those who fear him;
To remember mercy as he spoke to our fathers to Abraham and his seed forever. (Luke 1:46-49).*

10.19 Salvation

The word Jesus can be translated as God is my salvation; here, salvation is a person. Jesus' mission to save inverted the status quo, those in positions of power have been reduced, while the powerless are raised. "The hungry he has filled with good things, the rich he has sent away empty." The salvation anticipated by this canticle captures the mission of Jesus and that is why her spirit rejoices in "God my Saviour,"

*Because he made for me great things the Almighty
He aided Israel his servant. (Luke 1: 50).*

10.20 Lowliness Exalted

Mary's voice acknowledges her social status. She suggests that if wealth is not subordinate to a higher value, it leads one away from God and their neighbors:

*Because he looked upon the low estate of his handmaiden;
For behold from now on all generations will bless me;
He did mighty deeds with his arm;
He scattered the arrogant in the thoughts of their hearts;
He put down the mighty from thrones;
and exalted those of low estate. (Luke 1: 48-52).*

10.21 Lessons from Mary's Song

One of the lessons that we can learn from this song is humility. Although Mary was bestowed with the highest office of carrying the Messiah in her womb, she remained humble. With humility, Mary accepted the role given to her and magnified God for choosing her.

My soul Glorifies the Lord... (Luke 1: 46).

Mary was also simple and carried the task with honesty and obedience. Getting pregnant out of wedlock was taboo during Mary's time. It warranted stoning to death. However, Mary obediently took over the mantle of bringing salvation to the world. She knew that she was pure and honest. She did not have to prove herself to other people.

Few women who take up leadership positions make a lot of sacrifices. Some are forced to sacrifice their emotions, family, and social life to make it. These women require a lot of support from people who are close to them. Family members and close friends become their tower of strength. Mary had Elizabeth by her side, which made it easy for her. They also need God to pull through.

Prof. Akenga Teresa, the former University of Eldoret Vice Chancellor, said:

My greatest source of strength is God. Whatever hardship I go through; I rely on the word of God. I read various inspirational verses every little time I get. I plan my days to accommodate my roles as a VC, a mother of four children and five grandchildren, and reading the Bible. (Nakayiwa et al., 2020).

10.22 Conclusion

In this piece, we have had an engagement with Miriam, Deborah, and Mary, whose voices are heard in their leadership positions, for example, the praise of God of Miriam; Mary's Magnificat is sung in liturgy of the hour in chapels, religious houses, and churches. It is also sung in worship and ceremonies. These women's stories have revealed that women are powerful agents of change. The far-reaching benefits of diversity and gender parity in leadership and decision-making are increasingly recognized in all spheres.

There are numerous women in diverse leadership positions in economic, political, social, religious, and educational areas. Like Miriam, Deborah, and Mary, as women in leadership positions are noted for promoting justice and equality. They toil for pervasive progress for all. However, women suffer under-representation in decision-making processes in education, politics, and economics.

Our experience in Africa reveals that systems in all spheres of life hardly favor women. They face high competition for leadership positions in the market. They must prove beyond measure through their voice that they qualify for those positions and must be vetted for the same. There are still gender issues rooted in the patriarchal societies in which women leaders find themselves. Again, their voices must be

heard in this regard to create awareness in community and call for gender equality. Despite these difficulties, the few women leaders in education and, in particular, at the higher institutes of learning have shown their competence and capability to lead as V.C.s of the universities.

Miriam, Deborah, and Mary have shown the impact of team leadership, revolutionary and transformative leadership in their time, and the same applies today. Women leaders in education have revealed their hard work, commitment, and selfless service to society and the country.

10.22.1 Recommendations

We observe that women's representation in leadership roles in legislature, courts, executive boards, and community councils leads to deeper consideration of diverse views that impart fairness and equality. Women's leadership in education, in particular, increases access to education. Therefore, this study hopes that there will be more women in leadership positions in universities.

Leadership comes with suffering, and every leader must be ready to bear the suffering. Mary suffered so much physically and psychologically. She witnessed her son's tribulations and had to take the pain. Every mother wishes the best for their children. Mothers carry a heavy burden and responsibility of seeing the best in their children. When children suffer, women are greatly affected.

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