

An Abstract of the Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies Thesis of:

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The Women at the Well—A Reflection of Early Hebrew Women and Culture  
Through the Stories of Rebekah, Rachel, and Zipporah

The voices of women in the stories of the Hebrew Bible are seldom heard with few exceptions. The wives of three important patriarchal figures, Isaac, Jacob and Moses, are three women whose stories can offer some insight into ancient Hebrew culture, especially the role women played in society and as characters in literature. It isn't a mere coincidence that these three women, Rebekah, Rachel and Zipporah, are each introduced into biblical text by a well. By comparing these three stories with each other, Hebrew women in general, goddesses of the ancient Near East, and the symbolism of water, many new ideas can be brought forth for discussion about ancient Hebrew culture, the Hebrew's ancient narrative style, and influences of surrounding ancient Near Eastern cultures. These comparisons lay open the details within these stories, which stir up the possibilities of Hebrew priestesses, goddess worship among the Hebrews, and threads of matriarchal practices. From the voices of such women as Rebekah, Rachel, and Zipporah, we can gain a better understanding of the ancient Hebrew world and find evidence for a common heritage of goddess worship among ancient Near Eastern cultures.