AOSIS

Is God partial in creation? A feminist re-examination of gender in the Yahwist's narrative

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Traditional Christian patriarchy and primacy of the male gender, at any rate, are linked to the Yahwist creation narrative in which the man is seemingly created before the woman. Prevailing conversations have constructed doctrinal positions, polity and dogmatism around the tradition of male headship and female subjugation. The objective of this study was to reread the Yahwist narrative with the view of demystifying the male headship mythology through a systematic analysis of the interconnection between *adam* and *Adamah*. The study utilised grammatical and syntactical exegesis and feminist hermeneutics to advance informed constructions on demystifying male headship. While the grammatical and syntactical focused on the grammar and word ordering of the text to arrive at the authorial intended meaning, the feminist hermeneutics renders interpretation from the women's experience. Despite eisegetical tendencies surrounding some interpretations of the text of Genesis 2:21–25, the study adds to the discourses on a systematised derogatory view of the feminine gender by the Yahwist. This account presents gender asymmetry as it relates to biblical studies.

Intradisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary implications: This study contextualises gender asymmetries in ways that add to the discourse on egalitarianism.

Keywords: mythology; Yahwist creation narrative; exegesis; semiotic analysis; feminist hermeneutics; Genesis 2:21–25.

Introduction

Among the contentious conversations on the creation narrative is the patriarchy and subjugation of women (cf. Setyawan 2016). In this study, we tried to systematically contextualise the rendering of the two prominent concepts, namely, *adam* and *adamah* as they relate to gender asymmetry.

The use of *adam* and *adamah* in the Yahwist creation narrative (Gn 2:4ff) could be perceived as a pun (play on words). English rendering uses the expression 'man' or 'human beings' for *adam*. This is different from the common Hebrew word for man[*ish*]. However, the King James Version (KJV) uses 'Adam' in Genesis 2:19, the New International Version (NIV), and the Revised Standard Version (RSV) first use 'Adam' in Genesis 3:17; while the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) does not use 'Adam' until Genesis 4:25. These varying uses could suggest different understanding of the *adam* ranging from a proper name, to a person and to humanity. *Adamah*, although depending on the context, is variously translated as earth, arable ground, soil, territory, world, or underworld.

Another word that is used in close synonymous relation is *eretz* [land]. These words, *adamah* and *eretz,* are rendered as: ground, earth, land all depending on the context of usage. These words *adam* and *adamah* in the Hebrew text are not as clear as the English renderings seem to suggest. For instance, if the man, Adam, was created from the *adamah* and will return to the *adamah,* it therefore implies a connection in terms of Adam being earthy *adamah* (Berry 2011:30). Beyond the *adam* and *adamah*, a critical observation has been made by scholars on the two creation accounts in Genesis one and two. The first (1.1–2:3) is adjudged 'priestly' with the conclusion of the priests' recognition of the equality of the sexes. The second (2:4–25) is viewed as Yahwist with its ideology of women subjugation as the inferior sex (Maly 1968:2). To the Yahwist, it is the presupposition for male headship and female subjugation in Christian doctrine (Kassian 1990:12–13). This stems from the contentious Christian traditional view of the female who is expected to live in submission to male leadership (Gasque 1988). Proponents of the view of male leadership are referred to as patriarchal theologians. They have played contributive role to the way in which women have been viewed throughout history as they emphatically assert that the first three chapters of Genesis lay the foundation of biblical 'manhood' of leadership and womanhood of subjugation, as such, every

other biblical text must be interpreted consistently in line with the aforesaid chapters (Ortlund n.d.). By male headship, it presupposes a partnership of two spiritually equal human beings, man and woman, whereby the man bears the primary responsibility to lead the partnership in a God-glorifying direction (Ortlund n.d.).

These views are represented by Stanton (n.d.:8) in her introduction to the commentary on the *Women's Bible*. She writes: 'women began to protest against their civil and political degradation, they were referred to the Bible for an answer. When they protested against their unequal position in the church, they were referred to the Bible for an answer.' Thus, feminists have always had somewhat misconceptions in their relationship with the Bible being viewed as the source of misogynism and hatred towards the womanhood (cf. Fontaine 2013). Some feminists outrightly dismiss the Yahwist (and in fact the whole of Genesis 1–3) creation as legitimating male supremacy and female subjugation (cf. Premnath 2021). However, Phyllis Trible (1978:75–77) is an exception in her interpretation of the Yahwist creation story in *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* as she approaches it differently. She opines that the Yahwist creation is ambiguous and lacks certain clarity leading to false interpretation that has dominated the conventional way of thinking in western society for centuries. Trible insists that God created the first human being *ha'adam* from the *adamah*. She treats *ha'adam* as humanity – a generic term that does not refer particularly to any gender. Trible observes further that the first creature seemed to have disappeared after the creation of the female from the rib of the *ha'adam* and the new two creatures are called *'ishah* [woman] and *'ish*. Her main argument is that *ha'adam* was a sexless creature as well as genderless. Trible's work is very relevant to this study as she demonstrates a rereading of the Yahwist creation narrative for an inclusive interpretation.

It thus becomes necessary to ask the following questions: Does the Yahwist creation narrative really depict the claims of male primacy (leadership) and female subjugation (submission)? Was the *adam* fully male when created or an embodiment of both male and female before God separated them? What relationship exists between humanity [*adam*] and the earth [*adamah*]?

The study engaged the tools of lexical-syntactical analysis, which studies meaning of individual words (lexicology) and the way the words are ordered in a text to determine more accurately the authorial intended meaning. It has been described as the quest towards the understanding of words, idioms, grammatical forms, and the relationships among these items according to the convention as at the time of writing (Gorman 2001). Thus, lexical-syntactical analysis takes into consideration the dynamism of language such that biblical words would not be used in the context of contemporary connotations. It goes further to identify how a word is used by an author – that is either literally, figuratively or symbolically with the sole objective of arriving at the author's meaning. The presupposition for lexical-syntactical analysis being that words have a variety of meanings depending on the context in which they are used, making context a key factor in the analytical process. The work also used the tool of feminist hermeneutics in its interpretation of the text. By feminist hermeneutics, it means the interpretation of biblical text in consideration of women's experience. Drawing from these methods, and the subsequent interpretation of the textual data, the study discovered that the poor rendering of the actual meaning of certain Hebrew words related to gender asymmetry is driving the perceived assumption that supports male headship. This study adds to the prevailing scholarly discourse on biblical support for women subjugation. In the section that follows, we present the creation narrative as contextualised by the Yahwist.

Yahwist creation narrative and the claims of male primacy

The biblical account of creation is traced to Genesis 1 and 2. The first account (1–2:3) presents an orderly account of the world in 6 days through the spoken divine word with its climax on the creation of the Adam: male and female; with a mandate to dominate the created order, and to multiply and to fill the earth. However, the second account narrows its narrative to the formation of humanity the *adam* from the dust *adamah*, the garden placement of the *adam* in the midst of the trees and animals, and finally, the creation of woman from Adam's '*tsela*' [side or rib].

Feminist readers of the Bible are more inclined to the creation narrative of Genesis 1–2:3 over that of Genesis 2:4–25. The argument is simple: while the second account seemingly makes woman a derivative of and secondary to man, Genesis 1:27 presents an image of concurrent male and female creation.

In the English rendering of Genesis 2:7, *adam* is simply translated as 'man' and the 'man' is understood by many people as referring to a male human rather than to a generic human. In essence, the Hebrew text does not specifically refer to *adam* as a male human. A male figure only surfaces as the Hebrew *ish* after the operation mentioned in Genesis 2:21–22 when a part, or side, is taken out of him.

However, Piper (2024) argues for the primacy of man in the creation order. He reads *ish* [man] as the generic word for *adam*. This assertion is drawn from Genesis 2:23b '… she shall be called *ishah*, because she was taken out of *ish*' in his bid to justify his claims of man being made first. Ortlund (100) reads the *adam* of the Yahwist narrative in terms of maleness drawing the conclusion that man is the first human to be created. He argues that although the woman was the man's spiritual equal and suitable for him, she was not his equal in leadership as '…she was his "helper"'. By the '…virtue of his manhood, is called to lead for God. A woman, just by virtue of her womanhood, is called to help for God' (101). Obviously, Ortlund's understanding of the Hebrew *ezer* is as a maid, house-help.

However, *ezer* in Genesis 2:20 from where Ortlund draws his inspiration of help as a subordinate is translated variously in English language to include: support, help, helpmate, helpmeet, companion, among others. Campbell observes that part of the original purpose and power of the translated Hebrew term 'helpmeet', had been lost throughout the ages. Far from the original language, the Oxford English dictionary defines 'helpmeet' as 'even with or equal to'. This definition sounds apt to the authorial intended meaning.

A close analysis of Genesis 2:18 provides further clarity, as the Hebrew word *ezer* originates from two distinct roots that eventually merged as one (Freedman 2004). While one root means 'strength' or 'power', the later root meant 'help, rescue etc'. A strong rescuer or ally could be a viable translation. Freedman (2004) hints that in late rabbinical commentaries, *k'enegdo* means 'equal' and stated that in his view 'there is no basis for translating *k'enegdo* as "fit" or "appropriate," as has been done by some translators leading to the understanding of the woman as a 'fit helper'.

Another word that is used within the text that is relevant to the understanding of *ezer* is *kenegdo*. Traditionally, *kenegdo* has been translated as 'fit' or 'appropriate'; thus, describing the woman as 'fit or appropriate helper'.

Ezer occurs about 21 times in the Old Testament and from its nuances, 'help' should be taken in the widest sense because the references include both divine and human help (Schultz 1980). Dike (2021) observes that the Hebrew noun *ezer* used in this text and throughout the Hebrew scripture does not suggest 'help' in the sense of a servant but support, saviour, rescuer, protector. It is in this sense that the Psalmist of Psalm 121:1 declares: 'From whence does my help come? My help comes from the Lord'. Clearly *ezer* here denotes divine support. This does not in any way suggest that God is man's slave by being man's help. There are no further suggestions in the contextualised application, of the instances of *ezer* in these passages, that warrant the conclusion that either God or woman is subordinate to man. Furthermore, Mowczko (2013) observes very clearly that in the Hebrew text, the word *adam* is not necessarily a male human being as the *ha-adam* is consistently rendered as humanity (male and female) before the operation.

Adam: Fully male or an embodiment of male and female?

The likely question that could naturally arise is whether Adam is fully male or an embodiment of male and female. A journey round the text will offer some clarifications. The pericope that best fits the discussion is Genesis 2:21–23.

Analysis of the text (Gn 2:21–23)

Adam is mentioned with the Hebrew definite article *ha* that is *ha'adam*. Now observe, the *adam* of the Genesis text is not as ambiguous as it seems in English versions. For instance, all English renderings use the expression 'man' or 'humanity'

in Genesis 1:26, 27. The KJV uses 'Adam' (as a proper name) all through; NIV and RSV first use 'Adam' (as a proper name) in Genesis 3:17; while NRSV does not use 'Adam' until Genesis 4:25. This ambivalence is because of the fact that the word translated 'man' is usually preceded by the definite article *ha'adam*. Personal names in Hebrew language do not take the definite article. When proper name is meant, the form will be simply Adam, but *ha'adam* is used all through in the narrative. By the *ha* rendered along with the *adam*, literal translations such as 'the adam', 'the human', and 'the man' are deemed appropriate. By the *ha'adam* rendering therefore, no proper name is meant and as such, no particular individual is supposed. Impressively, the translators of the NIV thoughtfully made the renderings of the *ha adam* the man all through the narrative. But the editor's title for the passage is 'the creation of Adam and Eve'; an allusion to *adam* as a proper name for male human is grossly misleading.

From the three major Nigerian languages, namely, Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba, it is obvious that the latest version (Yoruba) is dependent on the KJV in its use of Adam as proper name for the male creature implying that what God created first was a man in the sense of maleness and not a generic man (male and female). However, the translators of the Igbo and Hausa versions seem to have access to the original language of the text, namely Hebrew, depicted by their consistency in rendering the *ha'adam* as the human [*madu, mutum*] (see Table 1). These terms are consistent with humanity (male and female inclusive) and represent the understanding of the use of *ha'adam* in the Priestly creation narrative (Genesis 1).

A fair appreciation of the Yahwist creation narrative clearly aligns more with the authors' translation of *adam* in the generic sense indicating humanity (male and female) and not *adam* as a proper name for the male being.

Genesis 2:21b-22: the Hebrew word *tsela* is translated into English by most translators to mean rib. The nuances are found in the Nigerian translations (see Table 1). This again points to over-dependence on translated versions by most translators. A survey of the uses of *tsela* in the Hebrew scripture reveals that the Hebrew *tsela* is translated as a 'side': (1) of man, for example in Job 18:12 and Jeremiah 20:10; (2) of inanimate things in Exodus 26:26, Genesis 26:27, Exodus 26:35, 1 Kings 6:34, Exodus 38:7, and Exodus 25:14; (3) a side chamber of the temple in 1 Kings 6:5, 8, Ezekiel 41:5, 6, 9, 11; and (4) as a place name (a town of the Benjamites, where Saul was buried) in Joshua 18:28 and 2 Samuel 21:14.

These uses point to the fact that the Hebrew *tsela* does not mean 'rib' as erroneously imported into the Genesis 2 narrative. Why is it that the only time *tsela* is translated into English as rib is in this text? However, Gesenius (1979) includes 'rib' as one of the three possible nuances of *tsela* with no possible explanation for the usage and could not equally provide any lexical evidence to substantiate the claim. The given lexical analysis reveals that *tsela* obviously means a part of or side of a whole.

TABLE 1: The text (Gn 2:21–23) in four versions.

Hebrew	King James Version	Igbo Version	Hausa Version	Yoruba version	Author's Translation
2:21 תַּרְדֵּמָה ׀ אֱלֹהִים יְהֹוָה וַיַּפֵּל אַחַת וַיִּקַּח וַיִּישָׁן עַל־הָאָדָם בָּשָׂר וַיִּסְגֹּר מִצַּלְעֹתָיו תַּחְתֶּנָּה:	21And the Lord caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof	21Jehova, búChineke, we me kaokéuradakwasimaduahu, o weraruura; O we weputaotùnimeọgiriga-ya, mechieanu-arun'ọnọdu-ya:	21Sai Ubangiji Allah yasabarcimainauyiyakwa-shemutumin. Lokacin da yakebarciUbangiji Allah yacireḍayadagacikinha-karkarinsayacikewurin da nama,	21OLÚWA Ọlọ́runsìmúoruni-jikakùnÁdámù, o sisùn: ó sìyòòkannínúegungun -ìhàrẹ̀, ó sì fi ẹran di ipòrẹ̀	2:21And God caused the human to fall into a deep sleep; and while asleep, he (God) took one portion of his side, and closed up the (the empty part) with flesh
22:22 אֶת־הַצֵּלָע ׀ אֱלֹהִים יְהֹוָה וַיִּבֶן וַיְבִאֶהָ לְאִשָּׁה מִן־הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר־לָקַח אֶל־הָאָדָם:	22And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.	22ọgiriga ahu, búnkeO weputaran'arumaduahu, Jehova, búChineke, we wueyadikauloka ọ ghọnwanyi, O me ka ọ biakutemaduahu.	22hakarkarin nan kuwa da Ubangiji Allah yaciredagamutuminyayi mace da shi, yakuwakawo ta gamutumin.	22OLÚWA Ọlọ́runsì fi egungun – ìhàtí ó múnîhàọkùnrinnamọobinrin, ó sìmú ú tọ̀ ọkùnrinnawà	22And the portion of his side, which the LORD God had taken from the man, made he a woman, and brought her to the man.
2:23 עֶצֶם הַפַּעַם זֹאת הָאָדָם וַיֹּאמֶר לְזֹאת מִבְּשָׂרִי וּבָשָׂר מֵעֲצָמַי מֵאִישׁ כִּי אִשָּׁה יִקָּרֵא לֻקֳחָה־זֹּאת:	23And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.	23Madu ahu we si, Ehe! nkabunọọkpukpusin'ọ-kpukpumputa, naanu-arusin'anu-arum puta: nkakaagãkpọNwayi, n'ihinaeweputarankan'-aruNwoke.	23Sai mutuminyace, 'Yanzudaiwannankashine-dagakasusuwana, nama ne kuwadaganamana, za a kira ta mace, don dagacikinmutum aka ciro ta'.	23Adamusìwípé, Eyiyi li egungunnínúegungun mi, àtierạn -aranínúẹran -ara mi: Obinrin li a ó mápè é, nítorítí a mú ú jádelátiaraọkùnrinwá.	23And the man said, 'This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man'.

The Septuagint (ancient Greek version of the Old Testament) has the Greek *pleura* for 'the side of the body', while in Hebrew scripture has *tsela*. According to the New Testament Greek Lexicon (Friberg 2005), *pleura* is used five times in the New Testament (four times in John and one time in Arts of the Apostles) as side of the body. Thus, an English translation based on the Septuagint is: God 'took one of his sides … and he built the side into a woman' (Gn 2:21–22). However, most English translators of the Septuagint continue the rib ideology thus; 'And God brought a trance upon Adam, and he slept, and he took one of his ribs, and filled up the flesh instead thereof' (Brenton 1986). It should be observed that the translators seem to be obsessed with the rib concept than with the wording of the Septuagint itself that most of the English translations of the Septuagint have *rib* in the place of side of the body. The idea of *tsela* as a side of Adam is also found in Rosenfeld's (2022) assertion that Eve was created from Adam's side following the opinion in the Talmud that Adam and Eve were initially created as a single being – with male and female halves.

The rendering of *tsela* in the Genesis creation narrative is misleading as it is only translated as rib in Genesis 2:21–22 and is never used outside the creation narrative of the woman. Moreover, translating the Hebrew word עֵלָע [*tsela*] as rib does not fit into the context of the narrative. The man describes the woman as 'born of my born and flesh of my flesh'. This is obviously not referring to a mere rib but something more than that. Also, God said the two shall become one flesh in agreement with the Talmud (Rosenfeld 2022). This is suggestive of two equal parts making a whole. Thus, the author's rendering of the Hebrew *tsela* as 'one portion' is suggestive of one side of the human (that is half of the human), including flesh and bone, which is very close to the original meaning of the text. The Classic Amplified Version (AMPC) shares the same view:

> And the rib or part of his side which the Lord God had taken from the man He built up and made into a woman, and he brought her to the man. (Gn 2:22)

The portion taken should be rightly viewed as the female side leaving the male portion man, not humanity.

Elsewhere in the Old Testament – Numbers 31:1 ff., the Hebrew word 'אָדָם [*adam*] is used variously about 'man' or 'woman', a suggestion that *adam* is a gender-neutral term. However, verse 47, וַשַּׁבַּעְעֶשְׂרֵים מֵאָה אֶחָד־חָמֵשׁ בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֵת וַיֹּאמְרֹ, אָדָם: translation reads:

> And of the children of Israel's half, Moses took one portion of fifty, both of man and of beast, and gave them unto the Levites, which kept the charge of the tabernacle of the Lord; as the Lord commanded Moses.

Adam, in the context of this verse, refers exclusively to the female human beings who were taken captive by the Israelites. By referring to them as *adam* [humans], they are distinct from the animals that were also plundered. Hence, while the English translation may sometimes render 'סָדָא' as 'man', the original Hebrew term is inclusive of both genders. *Adam* is not intrinsically man; as the Old Testament writers equally use *adam* for women. Thus, man is not humanity and should be rightly adjudged as part of humanity seeing that the two, namely, male and female make up the *adam* [humanity].

Notice, however, that the sense of man and woman in terms of maleness and femaleness is introduced in verse 23 with the Hebrew words *ish* [man] and *issha* [woman] following the Hebrew noun derivative pattern of feminine [*issha*] from the masculine [*ish*], not *adamah*; 'because she was taken out of man (*ish*)'. However, this verse still poses some challenges in understanding. She is taken out of *ish* not from *ha'adam*. What is introducing a change to the narrative? Keil and Delitzsch (2005) present Luther's rendering of *issha* of this text as the German *mannin*, meaning a female man. While the use of *mannin* is compatible with the narrative so far in the text, it is possible that Luther views verse 23 in context of the preceding undertone of the neutral gendered Adam. Obviously, such conclusion is wrong because the context of the text presents an *ish* instead of the *ha'adam* of the preceding narrative.

The connection between humanity [*adam*] and the earth [*adamah*]

'The LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being' (Gn 2:7). The English versions as well as

users of Genesis 2:7 are ignorant of the description of the relationship of humanity to the rest of creation. *Adamah* is the ground or dust from which Adam is formed. *Adam*, meaning 'humanity,' encompasses both male and female. The concept of the creation of '*Ha'adam afar min ha'Adamah*', out of the dust of the earth (Gn 2:7) is not found in the Genesis 1 creation narrative. The concept therefore offers some interesting connections for both ecological and gender studies.

Ecologically, the fact that Adam is formed from *adamah* [dust] emphasises humanity's connection to the earth. Here, humanity is not separate from nature, but made from it. This highlights the importance of humanity's care over the environment, as they are intrinsically linked to its well-being. Moreover, being created 'in the image of God' [*zelemelohim*] could be interpreted as giving humans a special responsibility to care for creation. This stewardship role could involve protecting the environment and using its resources sustainably.

With regard to gender studies, the wordplay between *adam* [man] and *adamah* [dust] does not necessarily point towards men being formed first or having a closer connection to the earth than the woman. Rather, this can be interpreted symbolically as a reminder of humanity's shared human origin in the *adam* – male and female, regardless of gender. Thus, while the passage focuses on *adam*, the creation of humanity (male and female) from the dust, it is only mentioned later (Gn 2:18) – a suggestion that both genders share the same origin and divinely-imaged nature.

The biblical portrayal of *adamah* is present, to some extent, in the African concept of land as the earth goddess. In the Igbo worldview, ala or Ani – the mother earth – is portrayed as the nurturing force that sustains all living beings. Udoka, Ojimba and Ojimba (2021) argue for the importance of Ala in understanding the Igbo worldview by exploring the multifaceted nature of Ala, highlighting its connection to the environment, morality, and the ancestors. Kanu (2018) stresses further that while *Chukwu* [the supreme God] is in charge of creation, *Ala* is in charge of conserving that which is created and is capable of maintaining morality in the land with the belief that the land can be defiled hence, the concept of *imeruoala*. A defiled earth [*imeruoAla*] does not directly translate to the Jewish concept of *adamah*. However, there are instances where the land becomes 'cursed' because of sin (Gn 4:11–12). However, the focus is on God's judgement rather than the earth itself acting as an enforcer.

Conclusion

With a focus on the wordplay between *adam* and *adamah* in Genesis, this article attempted a discovery of the real identity of the Yahwist *adam* in relation to the claims of male primacy (leadership) and female subjugation (submission). The work further examines interconnection between humanity [*adam*] and the earth [*adamah*]. So far, the work highlights the complexity of the original Hebrew.

The biblical creation narrative in Genesis 1 and 2 presents two distinct accounts. The first (1–2:3) depicts the orderly creation of the world in six days, culminating in the creation of humanity, male and female, with a mandate to rule over creation. The second narrative focuses on the formation of the first human (Adam) from dust and the creation of woman from Adam's side. Feminist readers favour the first account for its portrayal of concurrent male and female creation, unlike the seemingly derivative portrayal of woman in the second narrative. While some argue for the primacy of man based on the creation order, others interpret the Hebrew terms differently, suggesting that woman's role as 'helper' implies equality rather than subordination. The term '*ezer*' used to describe woman in Genesis 2:18 suggests support, rescuer, or protector, rather than a subordinate helper, challenging traditional interpretations. Overall, interpretations of these passages vary, but they highlight ongoing discussions about gender roles and equality within biblical texts.

The use of *adam* with the definite article 'ha' (*ha'adam*) in Genesis 1 and 2 indicates a generic humanity rather than a specific individual. While English translations often render *adam* as 'man' or 'humanity', this Hebrew construction suggests inclusivity of both genders. The Hebrew word *tsela*, translated as 'rib' in Genesis 2:21–22, carries nuances of 'side' rather than a literal rib, challenging traditional interpretations. Similarly, in Numbers 31:47, *adam* refers to female captives, emphasising the gender-inclusive nature of the term.

Genesis 2:7 describes the creation of humanity, emphasising their connection to the earth [*adamah*]. This ecological concept underscores humanity's responsibility to care for the environment, reflecting their intrinsic link to nature. Similarly, the wordplay between *adam* and *adamah* does not imply gender superiority but symbolises humanity's shared origin. Both genders share the same divinely-imaged nature, highlighted later in Genesis 2:18. This biblical portrayal of *adamah* resonates with African beliefs, such as the Igbo concept of Ala, or mother earth, symbolising nurturing and moral conservation. While not directly paralleling the Jewish concept of *adamah*, the idea of land being defiled echoes biblical themes of sin's impact on creation.

Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance to conduct this study was obtained from the University of Nigeria, Research Ethics Committee on 20 April 2024.

Data availability

The authors declare that all data that support this research article and findings are available in this article and its references.

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