

**MOTHERHOOD, MARRIAGE AND CAREER :**  
**SOME LIBERAL FEMINIST AND SOME ULTRA ORTHODOX**  
**JEWISH VIEWS**

by

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**ABSTRACT**

A comparison is made between the manner in which motherhood is perceived from a liberal feminist point of view within the patriarchal framework of modern western society, and the way in which it is viewed in ultra-orthodox Judaism among middle-class women. In considering some aspects of motherhood and marriage, a comparison is made between the ethics of liberal feminism, rooted as they are in liberal ideology, and the ethics of ultra-Orthodox Judaism. The problem of the exploitation of women during child-rearing and child-bearing years, as a result of financial dependence on an individual man, and the lack of legislation and protection for women in the private sphere regarding physical and mental abuse in marriage, is considered and compared with that of ultra-Orthodox Judaism where the private sphere is religiously legislated.

## PREFACE

Participation in the Women's Studies course created an awareness in me of certain divergent theoretical approaches to feminism that prevail today and stimulated a particular interest in liberal feminism. Despite thirty years of activity and marked progress and success in the political or public sphere, there remain within the parameters of liberal feminist thinking, facets within the private sphere which are still considered by certain liberal feminists to be problematic for some women. Motherhood and career conflict, and male dependence during child-bearing and child-rearing periods are some of the issues referred to. This study is a description of the attitudes and practices of a small group of ultra-Orthodox Jewish women who contend with motherhood and career choices in a manner which is largely prescribed by their religion. The hypothesis in this study is that a comparison between liberal feminist ethics, within the framework of western, capitalistic democracy, and the ethics of ultra-Orthodox Judaism indicates certain differences which are perhaps relevant to women's attitudes to motherhood. The comparison, as carried out in this study, is only relevant within the parameters of liberal feminist theory. The reason for this is that alternative feminist theories such as socialist, Marxist and radical feminism embody ethics and ideologies which differ somewhat from that of liberalism and would therefore not be similarly comparable. These other ideologies would offer

theories and propositions which would not be ideally operable within the framework of the status quo, unlike both liberal feminism and ultra-Orthodox Judaism. An aspect of this study is a consideration of the fact that, unlike modern western capitalist democracy, where there is little legislation pertaining to what is understood as the private sphere, the private sphere in ultra-Orthodox Judaism is subject to religious law dictating the behaviour of the people within marriage. Some of these laws regarding the treatment of women are perused, particularly those in relation to sexual behaviour in marriage. The recognition and discussion of the problems defined in this study are carried out in the spirit of Women's Studies.

As Bowles has pointed out

Women's Studies emerged out of a political movement and very practical concerns. To pose the problem first and then devise the method has always been our way and I would not like to see these origins in experience change. For me, then, the choice of the problem is crucial. (Of course, this assumes an ability to recognize problems.) For me that means what do we need to know in order to survive? (This takes us to such 'problems' as nuclear power and ecology.) And, if we do survive, what do we have to know in order to live relatively peacefully and happily together? (This takes us to such 'problems' as the relationships between people of different sexes and races and classes.) Now these are very large questions and very political ones. They are quite unlike most of the questions the academic disciplines are asking now. Yet our concepts of Women's Studies force these questions upon us. These are the

questions which are real to us, we who are both scholars and members of the women's community. Our constant reassertion of this link, a vigilance, even, will help to keep women's studies from becoming just another academic discipline, removed from the daily worlds of all of us.<sup>1</sup>

Unless indicated to the contrary in the text, this dissertation is representative of my own work.

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1 Bowles, G. and Klein, R.D. ed. Theories of Women's Studies (Routledge London, N.Y. 1983) Bowles, G. "Is Women's Studies an Academic Discipline?"

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## INTRODUCTION

In elucidating and evaluating the attitudes of Ultra-Orthodox Judaism towards motherhood and child-rearing, a comparison will be made with some of the attitudes and concerns of certain well-known liberal feminists with regard to<sup>1</sup> these issues.<sup>2</sup>

Liberal feminism is, of course, simply one of the modes of modern feminism. Its use in this thesis as the one pole of comparison therefore needs to be explained. First to deal with all the strands of feminism would entail going beyond the nature and scope of this thesis which is part of course-work for a Masters degree. At the same time, it is argued that the position of liberal feminism, especially insofar as it advocates a distinction between the private and public spheres, makes it especially appropriate as a contrast to Ultra-Orthodox Judaic law which penetrates the private realm, regulating all aspects of the relationship between women and men. It is, of course, true that radical feminism and Marxist feminism could equally be used as a basis of comparison,<sup>3</sup> but the fact that liberal feminism addresses itself specifically to middle class women endorses the perspective chosen, given that the Ultra-Orthodox women selected as case studies are themselves members of that class.

Liberal feminism has made enormous strides in improving legal and economic conditions for women in the public sphere, but has failed to eradicate certain problems in the private

sphere. It is with some of these problems and the manner in which they are dealt with by married Ultra-Orthodox Jewish women that this study is concerned.

Two main issues concerning women in marriage will be considered here. The first is that western society attaches low status to housework and child-care. This study is concerned with middle-class, white South Africans. The situation in South African society is aggravated because housework and child-care are tasks which are usually carried out by lowly paid Black women, thus increasing the reluctance of many men to become involved in these tasks. Ultra-Orthodox Jewish women opt for motherhood as a priority, although they frequently simultaneously pursue careers. They live with a value system which has motherhood and child-rearing as its highest spiritual level. The contention is that this spiritual elevation serves to diminish their conflict between motherhood and career.<sup>4</sup> In modern western society, status and prestige are measured by success in the public sphere. Motherhood and family life do not rank high, therefore, within this value system, on the ladder of esteem. Some of the economic and social conditions which have led to this devaluation will be explored.

Because the home had gained an array of new functions by the early 19th Century a cult of domesticity came into being. Because the home represented values antithetical to those of market capitalism, domesticity fuelled reform energies in the antebellum years. Because the home enjoyed such esteem in the culture, women could use it to justify their activism in the public sphere. But even as the word 'home' was being invoked by both men and women in their pleas for various reforms

in the late nineteenth century, its capacity to play this overarching role was being undermined: the institution of the American home itself was in rapid flux, and the society that came into being during the Gilded Age made much of the context for the ideology of domesticity obsolete.<sup>5</sup>

2. The second facet which will be considered is that of legislation. Western society, given its liberal ideology, fails largely to legislate behaviour in the private sphere.<sup>6</sup>

By contrast

The Jewish religion is unique in that it controls and regulates every phase of daily life. Its rules of conduct regulate dealings with people, every-day actions, the conduct of one's private life and home.<sup>7</sup>

Every facet of personal life and personal relationships are legislated for in halakhic law.<sup>8</sup> The pressure to abide by halakhic law is exerted by the fact that it is believed by observers to be divinely inspired as it emanates from the Torah.<sup>9</sup>

Liberal feminism and Judaism will briefly be defined and the historical origins and certain ideological tenets of both will be considered. Aspects of the two philosophies pertaining to specific areas concerning motherhood and family life will then be examined. The specific issues which will be dealt with are the concept of equality, attitude to marriage and child-care and the isolation of the woman in the nuclear family in urbanized Western society. The problem of financial dependence on an individual male during child-rearing and child-care, the concepts of public versus private and finally the issue of sex within marriage will also be discussed.

Six interviews form the basis of the empirical part of this dissertation. Ultra-Orthodoxy was voluntarily adopted by five of the abovementioned women in their adult years. They are all professionally qualified. The sixth interview was with a young, newly-qualified doctor from a traditional Jewish home (not Ultra-Orthodox), who had adopted some of the ethics of Judaism in an effort to cope with the conflict which she anticipates will arise between career and the prospect of motherhood. She intends using the family purity laws as she feels that they may obviate some of the common problems encountered in marriage regarding sexual relationships.

Many women experience a great deal of conflict over whether to pursue their careers or take care of their infants.<sup>10</sup> Young women today have, as a result of the success of the feminist struggle and also of a variety of economic, technological and scientific innovations (such as sophisticated birth control measures), gained a degree of freedom and a variety of lifestyle choices far beyond the wildest dreams of the previous generations. Desirable though they may seem, these choices are often the cause of great conflict in the lives of mothers. A considerable amount of literature has been produced on this subject<sup>11</sup> and although the general contention seems to be that adequate and affordable child-care facilities would provide one answer to this problem, it is contended that it is not true that all women desire that alternative. Moreover, although one finds that inadequate child-care facilities may be a problem in America and Europe, this is not the case in South Africa where most middle-class professional women would

not have much difficulty in obtaining adequate child-care in the form of a domestic worker in their own home. For some women, however, child-care is not the issue. The issue is in parting with their children - they want to care for them personally but they experience great conflict regarding this situation largely because child-care has a very low status in western urban society, and also because it places them in a position of economic dependence - usually on an individual male. It is because these women feel that Ultra-orthodox Judaism reduces some of these conflicts that it has been chosen as a life-style despite its seemingly anti-feminist and patriarchal image.

1 The feminist views which will be considered are specifically those of Friedan, Hewlett, Matthews as they are expressed in The Second Stage, (Sphere Books, London, 1983) - Just A Housewife (Oxford Univ. Press N.Y. 1987) and A Lesser Life (Michael Joseph, 1987) respectively. The work of Tong, Jaggar and Neustatter will also be referred to.

2 The aspects of Judaism which will be considered will be confined specifically to those dictates of the religion which pertain to marriage, sex and motherhood.

3 The Radical feminist slogan that "the personal is political," and Marxist feminism's criticisms that the liberal feminists' distinction between mental and manual work is a social construction ultimately serving the interests of the middle classes clearly provide foci for other comparative studies.

4 Davies, B and D'arne Welsch, "Motherhood and Feminism: Are They Compatible? The Ambience of Mothering" ANZJS Vol. 22, No. 3, November 1986.

" - it is not the mothering of small children or motherhood per se that leads to the feeling of ambivalence - it is the mothering under a particular set of conditions and beliefs about womanhood and motherhood that leads to conflict and loss of self."

5 Matthews, G., Just a Housewife, Pg. 92.

6 In S.A. there is no legislation guarding against rape in marriage - it is still under discussion - The Natal Mercury, April 24, 1990 and The Natal Mercury, February 14, 1990.

7 Goldin, D.H. The Jewish Woman in Her Home, (Hebrew Publ. Co. N.Y., 1941) - Pg. 72.

8 Halakhah is the rabbinical law which governs every aspect of daily life in Judaism.

9 The Torah is the entirety of Jewish law and knowledge and is considered to be God-given.

10 Friedan, B., The Second Stage, Hewlett, S.A., (1983). A Lesser Life, Matthews, G., Just A Housewife (1987).

11 Friedan, B., The Second Stage, Hewlett, S.A., (1983). A Lesser Life, Matthews, G., Just A Housewife (1987). Tong, R. Feminist Thought : A Comprehensive Introduction, (Unwin Hyman, 1989). Neustatter, A. Hyenas in Petticoats, (Penguin, 1989).

CHAPTER ONE

LIBERAL FEMINISM'S VIEW ON MARRIAGE AND MOTHERHOOD

Three decades of feminism still finds certain feminists agonizing over the dilemma of motherhood.

It is not just feminists who are confused about motherhood; the received images in a male-defined culture contain their own contradictions. A pregnant woman is both weak and powerful, sick and serene within the iconography ... seeking change in the circumstances of fertility and childcare has led to a radical search for alternative social possibilities both in terms of changes in relationships and division of activity and in demands for greater access and control over the resources of society."<sup>1</sup>

Women continue to suffer rape and assault within marriage and many women are exploited by husbands during their years of child-bearing and child-raising, as a result of their financial dependence during these periods. Sheila Rowbotham suggests that women's liberation, as a movement, created a political space in which women were able to consider motherhood as an option and not a prescribed fate.

{ A formative tenet of the women's movement has been that there should be a conscious decision whether or not to have a child.<sup>2</sup>

Given this freedom of choice, however, there is still evidence to indicate that, having chosen motherhood as an option, many women are placed in situations in which they are as vulnerable and open to exploitation by men as they were prior to the existence of the feminist movement.<sup>3</sup>

Further, regarding financial dependence on men, Raya Levin for example has argued that,

For working-class women, their feminism depends basically on them having a choice between working on terms which are acceptable to them, and being mothers without being dependent on men. This is what I felt so much at Holloway. What they needed was financial independence. They said they couldn't put up with having to coax the man round to getting a new coat - the humiliation - they would rather pinch it. They were not conformist women, they could bring it out much more openly. They didn't want to have to sweeten him up in order to get what they wanted. One could put it in a very simplistic way by saying that mothers should get a wage for looking after children and everybody else should contribute to a fund; all males and all female non-parents, i.e. all non-mothers, should contribute to this fund. Looking after children, bringing up children - women who want to do it - it should be open to them. Some or even many may not want to do it. But if they want to do it they should not have to fall on individual men.<sup>4</sup>

This study is not concerned with the prospect of revolutionizing society through feminist ideology. Its concern is with women who deal with the reality of being mothers and having careers and the conflict and frequent exploitation that results from this situation of dependency in modern western society for women who choose to care for their children themselves during their children's infancy.

To define feminism in very broad terms is a fairly simple task. It may be described as a commitment to end woman's subordination. When it comes to a detailed analysis of how the basis of that subordination is explained, however, the definition becomes more complex. Bell Hooks says that

A central problem within feminist discourse has been our inability to either arrive at a consensus of opinion about what feminism is or accept definition(s) that could serve as points of unification. Without agreed-upon definition(s), we lack a sound foundation on which to construct theory or engage in overall meaningful praxis.<sup>5</sup>

Despite the tremendous legal and economic strides that have been made by liberal feminists in particular for the benefit of many women, there is still difficulty in defining what it is that feminism stands for, and for many women feminism has not meant "emancipation".

In order to understand liberal feminism as we find it today, it is essential to know something of its roots. Liberalism, the philosophy of the emerging middle classes, had as its brief the issue of human rights, the freedom of individuals to choose, and the notion of equality which was defined in legal and civic terms. The liberal conceptions of the state saw its role as the protection of these rights in order to allow the maximum opportunities for individuals to exercise their capacity for rational choice and self fulfillment, reason being accorded the greatest value in society. The limits which liberalism therefore set to the state's authority were defined in accordance with the distinction between the public realm, within which legislation was required to ensure the protection of rights, and the private realm, held to be exempt from state intervention. In accordance with the value placed on reason, manual work was considered by liberals to be less valuable than the use of one's intellect, or reason, a

distinction which was in keeping with liberalism's historical association with the middle class.

Feminism emerged alongside liberalism in 19th century Europe and America finding fertile ground in the belief that individuals are free and equal and should be emancipated from the existing hierarchical bonds of tradition. Although these ideals and aspirations were originally confined to the political and legal front and considered relevant to men, it did not take women long to seize the opportunity to adopt the language of equality and emancipation. Although the term "feminism", was only coined in the late 19th century, its first seeds were sown and its first shoots became evident with the writings of Mary Wollstonecroft as early as 1792 with her the treatise, Vindication of the Rights of Women published in Britain.<sup>6</sup> In America, feminism was born alongside the movement to abolish slavery in the 1830's.<sup>7</sup> It was this struggle for equal human rights in both continents which stimulated the desire for equal status for women. Political analysts have regarded the main catalyst for feminism as being the extension to women of philosophical notions about the rights and responsibilities of the individual and the ideal of the 'natural' sexuality of all human beings, although these initially excluded women. But the philosophy of individualism which nurtured the ideal of the importance of self, was adopted by feminism as a justification for the elimination of the subordination of women. Early liberal feminists saw their task as relatively straightforward. Since traditional liberal

theory ascribed rights to persons on the basis of their capacity to reason, early feminists had to argue for women's rights by showing that women were indeed capable of reason.<sup>8</sup> Alison Jaggar characterizes liberal feminism as a logical extension of traditional liberalism.

It accepts the traditional liberal conception of human nature and the characteristic liberal values of individual dignity, equality, autonomy and self-fulfillment. It also accepts the liberal ideal of creating a society which maximizes individual autonomy and in which all individuals have an equal opportunity to pursue their own interests as they perceive them.<sup>9</sup>

- 18/01/23

In the early years of feminist politics, in spite of strong opposition from both males and females to the changing of traditional male-female roles in society, feminists saw the realization of many of their claims and demands in the public sphere. This was probably because they were in accord with the general trend of social and political developments at the time. Feminists of the so-called first wave in the 19th century therefore focused mainly on education, on women's right to property, on married women's rights and, in particular, on the vote. Indeed early feminists, including Wollstonecroft and John Stuart Mill, held the illusion that universal suffrage would emancipate women. That this was not the case is evidenced by the fact that today, in spite of a second wave of feminism which accompanied the political demands for human rights in the 1950's and 1960's, women's aspirations at achieving equality, freedom, or emancipation with regard to their situation in the private sphere have fallen short of expectation.

After 1920, feminism lay dormant for about 40 years until the re-awakening in the 1960's with the founding of The National Organization for Women by Betty Friedan and her followers. The twentieth century brought with it an awareness that discrimination on the basis of biological factors such as skin colour and sex need not be tolerated, and the struggle against racial differentiation and discrimination grew hand in hand with the fight against sexual discrimination. This time, however, there was an ingredient which assisted women in their struggle for equality with men, giving them a new-found possibility of freedom and a choice of whether to procreate or not - the advent of more advanced contraceptive technology. The impact therefore of industrialization, which had the effect of removing many traditional female functions from the home, coupled with capitalism and its accompanying ethic of liberalism and individualism, and the new-found freedom brought by contraception, provided women with a readiness and opportunity to apply equal rights doctrines to themselves with fervour. At the same time, however, one saw the effect of the capitalist "work-ethic" alter the perceived values of supposedly non-productive occupations such as housework and child-care, resulting in lowered self-esteem for people performing such tasks. It is arguable that this devaluation of the home, caused largely by the redundancy of the family as an economically productive unit, has served to denigrate the role of motherhood and child-care. Friedan in her book, The Feminine Mystique (1963),<sup>10</sup> deals precisely with this state of affairs. In interviewing many middle-class with American

women, Friedan showed that despite living their lives which supposedly exemplified domesticity, these women were, unhappy unfulfilled and expressed feelings of low self-esteem and isolation. This work therefore seemed to confirm the liberal feminist argument that women could not find fulfillment in the private sphere. Friedan advocated as her solution to the "problem with no name" that women enter the public sphere. In so doing she effectively further devalued motherhood and did not address the issue of how women could simultaneously pursue both career and motherhood. Her views are in accordance with liberal feminism's acceptance of the dichotomy between the public and private spheres. Housework and the care of children are regarded as unskilled and therefore not involving the full use of women's rational faculties. While liberal feminists devalue domestic work, they argue that self fulfillment will be achieved through the exercise of reason in the public sphere.

16/6/64

Friedan's identification of the "problem with no name" reflected some of the changes which had affected the lives of middle class women in the domestic sphere. In Just a Housewife, Glenna Matthews suggests that marriage has not always been regarded as a liability for the man and as a sort of favour conferred upon woman, involving for her a life insurance for a minimum premium. It was regarded as a necessity for all, both for their personal fulfillment and their economic benefit. Only when growing industrialization transferred more and more productive activities from the home to the factory, when machines relieved woman of a great part

of her household duties, and schools took over the education of her children, did woman's economic value as a contributor to the family income decline, particularly in the middle classes.

Where before women and children had assisted in providing for the needs of the family, this responsibility now devolved upon one man. Women and children became an economic liability rather than an asset, and marriage was increasingly felt to be a burden for the man. The emotional satisfaction which it may have offered to both man and woman was not enough to make good the loss of self-respect incurred on women by the knowledge of their economic uselessness. Thus as Glenna Matthews puts it

I started this book (Just a Housewife) with the realization that while American women were relegated to a separate sphere in 1850, it was a sphere that was central to the culture. One hundred years later, most American women were still functioning as housewives in some fashion, but the home was no longer central, and this made the role of housewife much more problematic for those who filled it. In fact by the mid-twentieth century many women had begun to think of themselves as "just a housewife". In 1850 a housewife knew she was essential not only to her family but also to her society. History would be affected by the cumulative impact of women creating good homes. Advice books, popular novels, and even the writings of male intellectuals set forth this theme and elaborated the ideal of the "notable housewife." In 1950, the suburban, middle-class housewife was doubly isolated: physically by the nature of housing patterns, and spiritually, because she had become the general factotum for her family. She was a cog in the economic machine, necessary for the maintenance of national prosperity but overlooked in discussions of the gross national product. The desperate letters sent to Betty Friedan, after she identified "the problem that has no name" - that

is, the emptiness of many housewives' lives - testify to the damage inflicted by the twentieth century version of domesticity.<sup>11</sup>

Liberal feminism's prescription for the emancipation of women has provoked much criticism in contemporary society and in so doing helped to cast doubt on the relevance of liberal feminism for the lives of middle class women.<sup>12</sup> Concerning the application of liberal ideology to women, Jaggar says that

In applying this ideal to women, however, underlying difficulties emerge. Liberal feminists may not confront these difficulties directly but, implicitly or explicitly, their demands raise the questions about the viability of some of the major tenets of liberal theory and even about the consistency of the liberal theory of human nature.<sup>13</sup>

Rosemary Tong discusses the controversy which still pervades much of the feminist thinking regarding the concepts of "equality" and "difference". In a discussion of Friedan's work, she says that in The Second Stage (1983) Friedan reminded her readers that single mothers living on substantially reduced incomes cannot be said to have the same opportunities to compete in the market-place as do women who are fully supported by men. Friedan insisted that if equal opportunity is society's goal, then the government must provide single mothers, as well as widowed and/or divorced homemakers, with an adequate subsidy. Tong suggests that Friedan has been moving away from her 1960's advocacy of gender-neutral laws as the type most likely to achieve equality between the sexes, in the direction, in the 1980's of

more gender-specific laws. Tong notes that in 1986 Friedan joined a coalition supporting a California law requiring employers to grant as much as four months unpaid leave to women disabled by pregnancy or child-birth.

In taking this stand, she alienated those members of the National Organization for Women who believed that to treat men and women equally should mean to treat them in the same way. If men should not receive special treatment on account of their sex, then neither should women. According to Friedan, this line of reasoning, which she herself pressed in the 1960's, is misguided. It asks the law to treat women as "male clones", when in fact there has to be a concept of equality that takes into account that women are the ones who have the babies.<sup>14</sup>

Concerning the issue of applying liberal principles to women as well as men, Jaggar notes that as well as opposing laws that establish different rights for women and for men, liberal feminists have also promoted legislation that actually prohibits various kinds of discrimination against women. She says that such legislation requires that women be equal to men regarding a variety of legal and economic situations. Maternity benefits and the establishment of child-care centers are also issues of concern. Jaggar says that

This historical shift in the focus of liberal feminism, from the emphasis on opposing discriminatory laws to the more recent emphasis on using the law to oppose other forms of discrimination, has some interesting consequences for liberal political theory and for the theory of human nature on which it rests.<sup>15</sup>

Jaggar argues that in spite of liberalism's contribution to feminism the liberal conception of human nature and of

political philosophy cannot constitute the philosophical foundation for an adequate theory of women's liberation. Jaggar draws attention to some of the problems associated with the liberal theory of human nature.

My criticisms have been organized round the overlapping topics of normative dualism, abstract individualism, and rationality. ...One of the fundamental problems that I have identified in liberal theory is its incapacity to provide a substantive conception of the good life and a way of identifying genuine human needs. These questions certainly are not simple; as we shall see, they confront every political theory, including every theory of women's liberation, and it is far from clear that any theory has an entirely satisfactory answer to them.<sup>16</sup>

Tong suggests that liberalism may be wrong to deny the differences between men and women and to press for gender-neutral laws and gender-blind policies. She sees the task of the liberal feminist as being to determine what liberty and equality mean in the lives of concrete men and women and not what liberty and equality are for abstract rational persons. She regards this as a difficult and dangerous task as she considers that the possibility exists that if women as a group are allowed special benefits, they will be open to charges of inferiority, and, at the same time, if all differences are denied, as has often been the case in the women's movement, then she sees the attention from the disadvantages which women labour under as being deflected.

Is there really a way to treat women and men differently yet equally without falling into some version of the pernicious "separate but equal" approach that characterized official race relations in the United States until the early 1960's? Or must liberal feminists work towards

the elimination of differences as the first step towards true equality? If so, should women become like men in order to be equal with men? Or should men become like women in order to be equal with men? Or should both men and women become androgynous, each person combining the correct blend of positive masculine and feminine characteristics in order to be equal with every other person?<sup>17</sup>

With regard to the liberal ethic of individualism, Jaggar says

...liberals do tend towards a general agreement on the probable objects of most people's desire. This agreement results from two assumptions that underlie liberal thought. One of these is the metaphysical assumption of the abstract individualism ... According to this assumption, each human individual has desires, interests, etc. that in principle can be fulfilled quite separately from the desires and interests of other people. The second assumption is ostensibly about the world rather than about human nature. It is that the resources necessary to sustain human life are always limited; in other words, that humans always inhabit an environment of relative scarcity. Given these two assumptions, liberal political theorists tend to suppose that each human individual will be motivated by the desire to secure as large an individual share as possible of the available resources.<sup>18</sup>

The implications for women of the individualistic ethic of liberalism is examined by Tong with reference to Jean Elshtain. Tong refers to Elshtain as a controversial political theorist who has debated with many feminists the nature and function of the family. Although Elshtain's opponents claim that she is a neoconservative intent on redrawing the nineteenth-century boundary between a private "female" domain and a public "male" domain. Elshtain insists this is not her intention. She considers her purpose as being to point out to liberal feminists that their emphasis on the priority of the individual over the community prevents people

from coming together.<sup>19</sup> Elshtain says that there is no way to create real communities out of an aggregate of 'freely' choosing adults. She is dissatisfied with what she perceives as the liberal feminist position on the individual-community balance and this is coupled with her dissatisfaction with what she perceives as the liberal feminist position on so-called "male" values. Tong describes 'Elshtain accusers', such as the Friedan of the 1960's, as equating male being with human being, and manly virtue with human virtue. Tong says that in her critique, Why Can't a Woman Be More Like a Man? Elshtain identified what, in her opinion, were three major flaws in liberal feminism. They were, firstly, liberal feminism's claim that women can become like men if they set their minds to it; secondly, that most women want to become like men; and thirdly, its claim that all women should want to become like men, to aspire to masculine values. She says that Elshtain accepts the view that some sex-based differences cannot be erased overnight without in some way doing violence to the personal identities of the men and women which they transform. Elshtain believes that certain biological and psychological differences between men and women should be recognized

...unless we wish to do what Plato suggested in The Republic - namely, banish everyone over the age of twelve and begin an intensive program of centrally controlled and uniform socialization from infancy onward - we cannot hope, in just a few generations, to eliminate these differences between men and women. In sum, women cannot be like men unless they are prepared to commit themselves to the kind of social engineering and behaviour modification that is incompatible with the spirit, if not also the letter, of liberal law.<sup>20</sup>

Regarding motherhood and child-care, it is very clear, from an historical perspective, that those issues which were discussed earlier relating to the devaluation of the family and the new freedom for women from the biological function of child-bearing, have radically changed the lives of many women. At the same time, however, this has resulted in increased conflict between motherhood and career, particularly in middle class women. The change in women's historical, political reality is that motherhood - which was once her necessity and passive destiny, and which confined, defined and used up her whole life - is no longer necessity, but choice, but even when <sup>not in 2.</sup> <sub>(RSA)</sub> chosen, no longer can define or even use up most of her life. However, liberal feminism has arguably tended not to make that conflict a priority.

Friedan's Second Stage, which stands as an autocritique, may be seen as her move away from her early liberal feminist position. In this work she argued that younger women were experiencing more psychological stress than their counterparts in the 1950's and '60's as a result of conflict and the added stress of pursuing career and motherhood. She suggests that there is a danger in not recognizing the realities of the lives of many millions of women. On the contrary it has arguably intensified the conflict and the prospect of relinquishing career opportunities to take on tasks which are regarded by many people as "mindless" (i.e. child-care and housework) has made this option unappealing for many women.

...these past few years, fulfilling my professional and political commitments, and picking up the pieces of my personal life, for which the women's movement has been the focus for nearly twenty years, I have been nagged by a new, uneasy urgency that won't let me leave. Listening to my own daughter and sons, and others of their generation whom I meet, lecturing at universities or professional conferences or feminist networks around the country and around the world, I sense something off, out of focus, going wrong in terms by which they are trying to live the equality we fought for.

From these daughters - getting older now, working hard, determined not to be trapped as their mothers were, and expecting so much, taking for granted the opportunities we had to struggle for - I've begun to hear undertones of pain and puzzlement, a queasiness, and uneasiness, almost a bitterness that they hardly dare admit. As if with all those opportunities that we won for them, and envy them, now can they ask out loud certain questions, talk about certain other needs they aren't supposed to worry about - those old needs which shaped our lives, and trapped us, and against which we rebelled?<sup>21</sup>

Friedan's final comment in The Second Stage is that false polarities should be eliminated and that the limits and true potential of women's power should be recognized and utilized in the new human politics that she expects to emerge.

And this new human liberation will enable us to take back the day and the night, and use the precious, limited resources of our earth and the limitless resources of our human capital to erect new kinds of homes for all our dreams, affirm new and old family bonds that can evolve and nourish us through all the changes of our lives and use the time that is our life to enrich our human possibility spelling our own names, at last, as women and men.<sup>22</sup>

There is evidence that Friedan is not alone in her re-examination of some early feminist thinking. Janet Ree is a

feminist who suggests that child-care, which was one of the main cries from the feminist movement to enable women to be free to pursue careers, may not provide solutions for certain women.

I know people have said it's wrong to perceive the early women's movement as being against children and mothering, and I'm not saying it was actively against them. But what I did pick up as being really primary for women was to be yourself in your own right. And for mothers that meant not falling for this so-called myth of motherhood. I completely accepted this line. The demands we formulated like the one for 24-hour nurseries, sprang from those beliefs that mothering oppressed women - and children too, in fact. The assumption was, it wasn't good for children to be too closely identified with the mother, that it was good for children to have working mothers whose lives weren't focused only on them. But there was a clash for me, even though at the time I didn't allow it to surface. I loved family life - I wanted to re-create it along the lines of how my own family had been before my mother died. It was a very conventional aspiration. And really the time was not right for those feelings of the family, not in the women's movement of early seventies - or at least not in the socialist feminist part of it I identified with.<sup>23</sup>

These thoughts are reiterated in the words of Clare Moynahan.

'I feel feminism has taken away the value of being a mother, but it had to be like that because the other thing had been so inbuilt into us. Perhaps we had to scream to be heard. I never felt feminism should be about saying you must not be a mother nor did many of the liberal women I know think that, but for a while I felt ashamed of just being a mother.' ...Turning against motherhood may have seemed an appropriate reaction to some women, but other feminists who had deliberated over this in the early Seventies began to consider the implications of denying themselves children.<sup>24</sup>

Angela Neustatter says that for some women there was a realization that childbearing is the one thing that women have

as uniquely their own, and that they should work harder at drawing men into child-care, or finding other innovative solutions, rather than refusing to participate in procreation. For women who had not altered their theoretical position on the oppressiveness of children in our society, she suggests there began to be an awareness of the positive side of having children, with discussion on how childbearing and the raising of children could be empowering in a world where power was denied them in many areas. One of the suggestions made by Neustatter<sup>25</sup> is that there should be greater involvement of the state in child-care, and consequently, in the private sphere. This is evidence of what Tong describes as a move away from the classical liberal ethic of minimal State intervention in the private sphere, to what she refers to as "welfare" or "egalitarian" liberals, although the latter were not advocating a revolutionary re-organization of society's wealth.<sup>26</sup>

In western urban society the devaluation, economically and politically, of the private sphere has resulted in a situation where there is arguably a need to re-evaluate the existing definition of the two spheres. The desire for the personal to be politicized (evident in some feminist thinking) is indicative of the need to re-examine the manner in which these spheres are defined. Elshtain notes that there are no neatly defined limits on the boundaries of what we regard as political and what is not political. She points out that the boundary shifts in the understanding of what is political and therefore what is public and what is private have taken place

throughout the history of Western life and thought. She contends that if all conceptual boundaries are blurred and all distinctions between public and private are eliminated, no politics can exist by definition.

Feminist analysts, be they radical, liberal Marxist, and psychoanalytic, share one overriding imperative and that is that they would redefine the boundaries of the public and the private, the personal and the political, in a manner that opens up certain questions of inquiry.<sup>27</sup>

At present, in modern western society the area which is understood as private, including the area pertaining to the relationships between husband and wife, parents and children, is subjected to a minimal amount of legislation. The regulation of relationships within this area is reliant largely on the goodwill of the individuals concerned. It is in this regard that one of the main problem areas exists concerning the dependence of women on individual men during child-bearing and child-care. There is evidence of abuse in this connection by men who take advantage of this dependence and this frequently results in untold suffering on the part of unprotected women. Women are often not given adequate money for their personal requirements are frequently subjected to the humiliation of having to ask for money from the man on whom they are dependent. Rape within marriage and a variety of other forms of brutality are not always legislated against in western society because they take place in the private, domestic sphere. In Judaism, however, the private sphere is highly regulated and subject to very strict laws and it is their effects on women that are perused in the following Chapter.

- 1 Rowbotham, S., "The Dilemmas of Mothering" Feminist Review, No. 3. Spring 1989.
- 2 Rowbotham, S., Ibid.
- 3 Friedan, B. Matthews, G. and Hewlett, S., in The Second Stage (1983); Just a Housewife (1987) and A Lesser Life (1987) respectively, explore the dilemma as it occurs in the lives of many women today.
- 4 Levin, R., "Raya Levin" Once a Feminist, Stories of a Generation ed. Wandor, M. (Virago Press 1990), Pg. 51.
- 5 Hooks, Bell, "Feminism: A Movement to end Sexist Oppression" in Feminism and Equality, Ann Phillips (Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1987).
- 6 Wollstonecroft herself inherited a tradition of protest which was first articulated by Christine de Pizan in the 15th century and taken up in the 16th and 17th centuries by writers such as Marguerite of Navarre, Mary Astell and Marie Gournay who participated in the so-called "argument about women." In the 18th century Olympe de Gouge, active during the French Revolution, put forward her famous document, "Declaration of Rights of Women Citizeness"
- 7 In 1848 Elizabeth Cady Stanton set out the injustices suffered by women during the Women's Rights Convention held at Seneca Falls.
- 8 Jaggar, A.M., Feminist Politics and Human Nature, (1983), Rowman & Allanheld 1983) Pg. 34.
- 9 Jaggar, A.M., Ibid, Pg.39.
- 10 Friedan, B., The Feminine Mystique, (1963)
- 11 Matthews, G., Just A Housewife, - 1987 - On the basis of an examination of a vast array of sources, ranging from novels like Huckleberry Finn, Uncle Tom's Cabin and Main Street, to letters, popular magazines, and cookbooks, Matthews sets out to examine what women had and what they have lost in modern times. She argues that the culture of professionalism of the late nineteenth century and the culture of consumption that came to fruition in the 1920's combined to kill off the "cult of domesticity" and led to what Betty Friedan identified in The Feminine Mystique as "the problem that has no name - the emptiness and devaluation of many housewives' lives."
- 12 Liberal feminism does not have a resonance for working class women or peasants but even its solution for middle class women came under scrutiny.
- 13 Jaggar, A.M., Feminist Politics and Human Nature, (1983), Pg. 39.
- 14 Tong, R., Feminist Thought : A Comprehensive Introduction, (Unwin Hyman, London, 1989), Pg. 27.

- 15 Jaggar, A.M., Feminist Politics and Human Nature, (1983), Pg 35.
- 16 Jaggar, A.M., Feminist Politics and Human Nature, (1983), Pg. 48.
- 17 Tong, R., Feminist Thought : A Comprehensive Introduction, (1989) Pg. 27.
- 18 Jaggar, A.M., Feminist Politics and Human Nature, (1983), Pg. 356.
- 19 Compare this with the importance of community life in Jewish Law. Chapter 2.
- 20 Tong, R., Feminist Thought : A Comprehensive Introduction, (1989), Pg. 32.
- 21 Friedan, B., The Second Stage (Abacus 1983), Pg 15.
- 22 Friedan, B., Ibid, Pg. 343.
- 23 Once a Feminist Interviews by M. Andor, Pg.93 (1990).
- 24 Neustatter, A., Hyanas in Petticoats, (Penguin 1989), Pg. 83.
- 25 Friedan, B., The Second Stage (Abacus 1983), Pg 12.
- 26 Tong, R., Feminist Thought : A Comprehensive Introduction, (1989), Pg. 12.
- 27 Elshtain, Public Man, Private Woman, (Princeton University Press, 1981), Pg. 325.

## CHAPTER TWO

### ULTRA-ORTHODOX JEWISH VIEWS ON MARRIAGE AND MOTHERHOOD

In this chapter some of the basic tenets of Judaism, as they pertain to marriage and motherhood are described and discussed. The particular interpretation of Jewish law and ethics which is utilized in this thesis is derived largely from the Ohr Somayach Community<sup>1</sup> in Johannesburg.

Despite the fact that the central core of the Jewish ethic has remained unchanged since biblical times, there is a certain degree of flexibility with regard to the interpretation of some laws. David Bleich says that

Jewish teaching recognizes that two conflicting conclusions may at times, be derived from identical sources by different scholars. Which is correct? Both are correct! If two conflicting conclusions may be derived by the same corpus of law, then both must be inherent therein. In the realm of theory both are correct, both are Torah.<sup>2</sup>

It is this flexibility of interpretation which has allowed young, professional Jews to re-interpret Jewish law in accordance with modern thinking and at times, along the lines of certain feminist principles and attitudes. The interpretation of existing laws have altered, without change in the laws as such.

Although the Torah itself is immutable the sages teach that the interpretation of its many laws and regulations is entirely within the province of human intellect. Torah is divine but "it is not in the heavens." (Deut. 30:12) it is to be interpreted and applied by human beings.<sup>3</sup>

An example of how modern Ultra-Orthodox women have re-interpreted Jewish law to their advantage is evident in the manner in which they carry out the law which prescribes that married women should cover their heads in public. In the past this was an example of discriminatory practice.

A woman's hair is often referred to as her "crowning glory", and the directive to cover the hair after marriage had the effect of minimizing a women<sup>a</sup>'s attractiveness in public. Ultra-Orthodox women today use this directive to their advantage. They abide by the law of covering their heads with scarves and wigs which enhance their looks rather than detract from them which was the case until recent times. This, of course, defeats the purpose for which the law was originally intended.

In Rabbi Tatz's interpretation, the concepts male and female form the complements of any creative process. The male is representative of the source of the spark of inspiration and the female is representative of the power to accept this spark and nurture it, while maintaining it alive as a generative force, into an independent entity which is itself alive and capable of further creation.

The least abstracted model for this interacting duality is the biological relationship between man and woman, and the parallel is not simply an analogy, but is identical to and of the essence of the concept. The male contributes the seminal spark, microscopic in dimension and yet containing the germ of that which is to develop. The female has the ability to hold this speck of almost-nothing within herself and build it, consistently and over an extended period of time, into a

complete life. She contributes its total environment, its nutrition and thus all its physical composition with the exception of the infinitesimally small contribution of the male, she is the source of maintenance of life itself for the concepts, and the transition from dependence to independence as a complete entity, birth, is from her being. ... Maleness tends to the pole of infinite conceptual genesis, femaleness to the pole of the materializing forces, the construction of reality.<sup>4</sup>

Despite this differentiation between maleness and femaleness, Tatz also claims that:

In the practical world there is no pure expression of either maleness or femaleness, both men and women contain elements of each other's identity and their relationship is therefore a complex and tightly interdependent resonance....There is a tremendous respect of each partner for the abilities of the other; each has a power far distant from the realm of the other, a man cannot nurture a pregnancy and give birth and similarly he is not emotionally and spiritually equipped for the non-physical correlates of these activities. Only a fool would argue about which set of function is "better" or envy the other's; a wise person chooses to develop his or her particular sphere of expertise to the maximum and thrives on the complementary function of a partner in a relationship which is an organic unity.<sup>5</sup>

This conception has implications for the roles played by men and women within the family. Rabbi Tatz explains that what is important in a marriage, and in<sup>6</sup> the perpetuation of traditional family life, is that certain functions are performed by certain individuals. This division of labour need not necessarily be based on the biological characteristic of sex. He says that although the generalizations dealt with above, may act as a guideline for role division within a family, it is far more important to allocate role according to

individual talent rather than to the prescribed factor of sex. In his view, if the female partner in a marriage has the ability to "be a brain surgeon", then the male partner should assist her in performing this role and he should take on greater responsibility regarding child-care and other domestic responsibilities. He stresses that what is important is not who performs the roles, or tasks, but that these roles, or tasks, must be performed. For instance, the children must be educated in accordance with certain ethics and principles, and the home must be run in accordance with certain religious regulations, and there should always be a clear understanding of who performs which tasks and there should be no uncalled-for interference by one partner or the other in these spheres of responsibility. Role-division is regarded as imperative in family life, but that it should be based on individual ability, desire and talent, rather than on sex is further evidence of the manner in which feminist attitudes have influenced the interpretation of modern Ultra-Orthodox Judaism.

Perhaps some of the most discriminatory words against women in Jewish lore are contained in the morning prayer recited by men. "Blessed are Thou who has not made me a woman". In the light of the Women's Movement, scholars have therefore tried to explain away that discrimination by focusing on women's role as mother and its attendant blessings in a positive light. Thus, for example, Brayer argues,

Men do not have to suffer physically, as women do, in fulfilling their function of child-bearing and child-raising. When women say their own morning blessing "Blessed art Thou...who has made me according to Thy will," the belief is held that, although the functions of the woman are filled with pain, her recompense is a joy that no man, no matter how tender and loving a father, can experience.<sup>7</sup>

Traditionally the Jewish view of menstruation as expressed in Leviticus was that it rendered woman unclean. Hence the need for the ritual bath or Mikvah which women were obliged to take after seven days in order to be purified or become "clean" again. Feminists have analysed widespread taboos against menstruation in an attempt to illustrate how these discriminate against women. Blu Greenberg shows how Judaism has been influenced by feminist ideas and thus she speaks of "white" rather than "clean", thereby avoiding the connotations surrounding the latter word.

(A word about the use of the term "whites" I do not like the term seven "clean" days, which all of the English sources employ, for it evokes its counterpart, "unclean". I therefore prefer "whites", which is the literal translation of the talmudic <sup>8</sup> "levanim", the white garments that women were required to wear during those seven days in order to facilitate the search for stains.)<sup>9</sup>

While acknowledging the possibility of reinterpretation within Jewish law, it is clear that from a feminist point of view the fundamental tenet that a woman's role is essentially that of wife and mother has not significantly been challenged in any of the examples above. Thus despite Rabbi Tatz's support of the possibility of role models being changed, such a situation

would be the exception rather than the rule. What feminism has done is to provide an approbatory ideology which will presumably reward women for their roles by exalting a woman's status as wife and mother. In the final analysis there can be no question of that traditional family pattern being changed. Judaism is a patriarchal religion and the Jewish family upholds and reinforces male authority. Judaism lays great stress on the family which plays an important role in the perpetuation of the Judaic ethic. It is therefore essential that family unity be upheld. Hence the central role of the woman. But given the advent of the woman's movement Judaism has been forced to acknowledge its impact on the lives of women and especially middle-class Jewish women who pursue careers. Thus it has had to deal with overt instances of discrimination which are supposedly compensated for by an affirming justification of traditional roles.

In an explanation of some of the religious principles of Judaism, Rabbi Tatz notes that Torah values are almost invariably the direct opposite to the values of the secular world. There is a considerable amount of evidence to substantiate this view when one contrasts some of the principles on which liberal thinking for instance, are based, with certain Jewish ethics and beliefs. Two of the basic, or prime tenets of liberalism, are firstly, the importance of the individual and individual rights in society, and secondly, the basic premise that human beings are rational and will behave in a rational manner towards one another, which finds its concomitant in minimal legislation in the private sphere. On

both these issues Judaism holds views which are directly opposite to this manner of thinking. On the first issue, that of individualism and the importance of individual rights, the Jewish belief is held that, although the individual is important, the behaviour of the individual must be governed by an attitude of concern for others rather than for oneself. The concept of individual "rights" is contrasted with a concern for individual "obligations". Rabbi Tatz explains this view as follows.<sup>10</sup> Contracts between people is the ideal constitutional model on which much of Western democracy is based, and it is considered to be a formula for good political and human relationships. It is based on the individual's right to "take" from society what is due to her/him. This involves the individual's rights to free speech, rights to free assembly, rights to property ownership and so on. (There are, of course, obligations as well as rights in western society, but in the Torah there is never a mention of rights, there are only obligations). There is evidence that demands for rights often leads to conflict between groups of people who feel that their rights are not being justly met. The difference between rights and obligations is one of focus. Rabbi Tatz gives an example to illustrate this point in the following story from the Midrash.<sup>11</sup> In Jewish law the relationship between master and servant is defined in terms of obligations. The master has an obligation to treat his servant like a brother and the servant has an obligation to treat his master like a master. The Midrash explains that if the master and servant concentrate on these obligations there

will be harmony. The emphasis on their relationship will be on giving. If they reverse this thinking however, and they concentrate on their rights towards one another, this will result in conflict. The master will demand his rights and dues in the form of how much labour is due to him from the servant, and the servant will concentrate on whether the master is fulfilling his brotherly obligations towards him as a servant and this will inevitably lead to conflict as their prime concern has now been reversed and they are concentrating on rights (taking) instead of on obligations (giving).

The second important area of difference between liberalism and Judaism mentioned earlier is that which concerns legislation and is directly linked to the contrasting belief of the two philosophies regarding the constitution of human nature. It has already stated that liberal thinking regards human beings as rational creatures, capable of regulating their behaviour towards one another without a great deal of legislative interference in the private sphere. Contrastingly in Judaism the belief is held that human behaviour is governed by certain basic desires, namely sex, food and power, and that these urges need to be controlled and legislated in order for there to be harmony in society. There are 613 laws governing people's behaviour in the private and public sphere. The laws are designed to channel basic human traits into acceptable social behaviour which is regarded as beneficial to the perpetuation of the species and the well-being of the community.

Before examining some of the individual laws and concepts pertaining to women in Judaism it is relevant to take cognizance of the interpretation given by Rabbi Tatz as to the mystical interpretation of the origins of the Universe. This interpretation has relevance for an understanding of the religious Jewish view of marriage. Rabbi Tatz explains marriage as an idea which is directly related to the Jewish conception of the Universe as conceived in mystical<sup>12</sup> terms. He describes the creation of man and woman as one of the first things that came about in the creation process. Adam and Eve were created as one being with two faces. They had no back. They requested to be separated so that they could experience the physical pleasure that they witnessed in animals. In answer to this request God ripped them apart, creating the human "back". The "back" has negative connotations. It is, for instance, from the back that excretion takes place. Adam and Eve were then given the task of coming together again as one through their own effort, as opposed to having been given this togetherness as a gift. The word in Hebrew for bride is kala and the root of the word means "complete". They explain that the experience of marriage exists to provide a sense of "completeness". In Judaism therefore the perfection of being human lies in marriage. Rabbi Tatz elaborates on this as follows. The essence of what it means to have a successful marriage lies in the essence of what it means, in Judaism, to be a giver or practice hesed.<sup>13</sup> The idea of being human, according to Jewish belief, is being given the challenge of being a "giver" or a "taker". If one is a "giver" then one

lives spiritually and one is considered successful from a religious point of view and if one is a "taker" and one wants to take from life and from others, rather than give, then it is believed that there is no possibility of success in human relationships or spiritual progress. The understanding is that marriage and parenthood cannot be successful if one bases the relationship on taking rather than giving. God is believed to have created the universe and the task of completion, of creating a perfect world, was left to human beings. A human being's task is regarded as being to do the will of God. In Rabbi Tatz's interpretation this means that a person must make God's will one's own will. Spiritually this means that when God created the Universe he was fulfilling a "desire". Rabbi Tatz says that he uses the word "desire" deliberately as this is where the essence of marriage lies. In any form of creation, desire is the first part of the creative process. If, therefore, one is doing the will of God, one is completing this process and completing the circuit of creation.<sup>14</sup> If however a person does what she/he wants instead of God wants, then one breaks the circuit. This is the root of the mystical idea, held in Judaism, that "give" is to "live" and to "take" is to "die".

The Torah definition of "love" is "give". This contrasts with secular definitions which frequently regard love as a concept of "getting". For instance, the understanding is often held in the secular way of thinking that if someone makes you feel "good" then you love that person. In Judaism the opposite

view is held. The belief is that you must give first in order to love something or someone. You must put something of yourself into the object of love and then you will love. In mystical terms the operation of this thinking is understood as being that if you give of yourself then you will love because you love yourself, and therefore you are giving the most precious thing there is to give. The directive therefore is to give of yourself, not of your material possessions, in order to love and to gain spirituality.

To sum up the Jewish view of marriage, one may say that firstly it is linked to the idea of "completion" as described in the mystical interpretation of the process of creation and also with the idea of giving of oneself in order to love and to emulate God and fulfill God's will. The purpose of describing the Jewish ideas of creation and spirituality is to illustrate that marriage is central to these ideas. The institution of marriage is reinforced as a result of its mystical interpretation in the body of Jewish beliefs.

The notion of hesed has a profound effect on relationships within marriage. Meiselman<sup>15</sup> elaborates on this notion when he notes that hesed is the ability to shift the entire focus of one's concern.<sup>16</sup> Hesed is not performed for the moral pleasure of doing good but rather because of total identification with the troubles and sorrows of other people. He describes two distinct mitzvos which are integral to hesed. The first kind requires the giving of money or other material sustenance to the poor. The second is more intangible. It

requires the donor to feel the pain of the poor and be concerned with their problem. Charity must not be seen as a means for a person's own moral advantage otherwise one will be too concerned with oneself to experience hesed. Hesed requires the merging of one's own concerns with those of one's neighbour so that one no longer thinks only in terms of oneself. Hesed begins with those who are closest to us, first with one's family, and then with one's neighbours. To live alone is to deny the foundation of Jewish ethics and the experience and emotion of hesed. Hesed is required on all levels of human existence and it is demanding of both men and women in the performance of their tasks. It is the practice of this ethic which ensures that women, who are confined to the home as a result of child-care, do not become isolated as is sometimes the case with modern western women in suburbia. The religious directive to be involved in the community ensures that there is always contact with other women, either because one is giving support to someone or receiving it from someone. The belief is that one may not live one's life in isolation.

Sexual relations in marriage are considered to be the highest expression of hesed. The belief is held in Judaism that human beings are uplifted through the union of body and soul. A man is required to maintain regular relations with his wife and satisfy her physically and emotionally.<sup>17</sup> In the Jewish view, sex is not considered a 'sin' on the contrary it is often considered a blessing. The attitude to sex is that it is

neither intrinsically evil nor intrinsically good. People must endow it with these traits. At its highest it is of the greatest purity and sanctity. At its lowest, it may be revolting and obnoxious. To express the essence of the Jewish idea simply, sexual relations are elevated only when they are expressive of a deep and permanent relationship between two people. Because of the high degree of privacy and intimacy they entail, they reflect a unique relationship between the two persons concerned. Sexual relations are permitted only within the marital framework. A husband and wife are understood to be reserved for one another exclusively sexually, and if any aspect of their private relationship is exposed to public view, its intimate nature is believed to be lessened. Within the marital framework, sexual relations are not permitted if either of the partners is not fully committed to the other. For instance if divorce is considered, sexual relations are forbidden. If a couple quarrelled during the day they are forbidden to each other that night because the view is that such a relationship would be purely physical rather than expressive of a deep love. (It is equated with prostitution under such circumstances - devoid of love and merely expressive of selfish gratification - this is not permitted). Similarly, when either party is drunk or asleep, sexual intercourse is not permitted. It is mutual devotion which, as the essential ingredient, raises marital relations to the level of sanctity and purity. Meiselman makes this point.

As R. Menahem Recanti (d. ca. 1290) said 'Had relations been only physical the Bible would not have referred to them by the term yediah.<sup>18</sup> Sex is considered to have three purposes:  
(1) procreation (2) the mitzvah of onah,<sup>19</sup>  
(3) physical.<sup>20</sup>

It is the first two which are considered to endow marital relations with sanctity and purity. In the Torah it is clearly stated that it is the man's obligation to maintain regular relations with his wife and this is ensured through the mitzvah known as onah. Onah requires that a man should have relations with his wife in accordance with the nature of his work. This would depend on whether he was a labourer or whether his work was intellectual - the suggestion is that the labourer would probably indulge more frequently than the man who worked with his intellect as it is considered that intellectual activities drain one's strength. Moreover, a husband is required to have relations with his wife whenever she indicates a desire. Furthermore, whenever he can anticipate her desire, he must have relations without her needing to indicate it to him. Such occasions would include the night that she goes to the mikvah<sup>21</sup> and before he departs for a trip. Another very important facet of these sexual laws is that in addition to establishing the minimum obligation, onah requires a man to ensure his wife's satisfaction.<sup>22</sup>

The laws of abstention from intercourse during menstruation are biblical. The laws of niddah<sup>23</sup> have often come under fire from secularists as being demeaning to women. The women interviewed, however, without exception, all reported that the

laws of niddah are very much to their advantage.<sup>24</sup> They find that the practice of these laws ensures renewed appreciation of sexual relationships each month, and that it is a time to relate to one's spouse as a person and not only a sexual object. The practice of the laws of niddah requires that, amongst other things, the married couple should have a total separation from one another, not even touching one another, for twelve days each month.<sup>25</sup>

It has already been mentioned that one of the contrasts between liberalism and Judaism is concerned with the legislation of the private sphere, resulting from a difference in view regarding human nature. Aside from the Jewish view, which regards legislative control of the private sphere as essential because of the characteristics of human nature, there is also the aspect of Jewish law as being derived from God. God is regarded not only as the one who brought the physical universe into being but also as the source of moral law. In Judaism the moral and physical worlds are interdependent. There is a recognition of the two spheres but they are both sheltered under the common umbrella of Jewish law.

Our tradition teaches us that the moral principles of the Torah were the prearranged plan which determined the patterns of physical creation. The laws of the Torah, tradition continues, preceded physical creation. to realize the moral end of creation, man was fashioned to serve as that being who would bring moral order into the universe. There is, hence, no contradiction between the laws of the Torah and human nature and God is considered the source of ethics.<sup>26</sup>

The facet of Jewish law which affects every minute detail of daily life and human relationships is known as halakhah. Halakhah comprises the 613 precepts which comprises the accepted interpretation of the written laws. Halakhah is not, however, simply a collection of laws. It is a way of living.<sup>27</sup> Although these laws exist independently of the civil laws of a specific government or society and therefore violations of these laws are not punishable in civil law courts, there are nevertheless pressures against individuals who commit offences. Taking into account, however, that the laws are considered by believers to be God-given, this in itself provides a pressure to conform. There are, however, rabbinical courts (Beth-Din) which would listen to complaints about transgressions and would intervene on behalf of the complainant, from the point of view of counselling and chastisement. A Beth-Din constitutes a body of Rabbis who judge and advise on the administration of halakhah. Women and men have recourse to this body if they need assistance in any way regarding problems which they may have in marriage or in other spheres of life. Although in secular society a Beth-Din does not have the power to confine people to gaol, it nevertheless exerts a considerable amount of influence on believers.

For a Jew a life directed by halakhah is as near perfect a way of life as possible. the sum of its parts - observing the Sabbath, Kashrut,<sup>28</sup> giving to charity, having a family, being part of community teaching children, studying Torah, loving God - is infinitely greater than each of the parts ... halakhah is a system that is being perfected continually. Indeed, the rabbinic tradition stresses humanity's role as a partner in

the task of perfecting an imperfect world. One cannot perceive halakhah as a fluid, dynamic system.<sup>29</sup>

The Talmud provides a detailed exposition of a man's obligations towards his wife financially and also provides for the possibility of the working wife. If a woman works she is entitled to keep her earnings. Individual instances, in this regard, were subject to individual rabbinic decisions. The fact that financial dependence on individual men continues to be problematic for many women who are exploited by men during times of child-bearing and child-rearing in particular, is largely obviated in Judaism by the fact that this area of living is strictly legislated. The legal marriage document in Judaism, known as the ketubah, was designed to protect women at times of dependence. Upon marriage a man is obligated to care for his wife both on a personal and a legal level. The Talmud expresses the underlying philosophy of these laws in its directive that a man must spend more money on his wife's needs than on his own. The understanding is that a wife must never, under any circumstances, be put in a position where she has to ask for money. Money, in accordance with the man's income, must be placed at her disposal. This is halakhic law. To have to ask for money is considered demeaning and humiliating.

From a feminist perspective the Ultra-Orthodox Judaic views of woman and her roles as wife and mother count as examples of discrimination. Nevertheless it is important to stress that the women interviewed in this study (all of whom are

professionally qualified) voluntarily opted to assume the major responsibility for child-rearing within their family situation. In no case did the equivalent of Rabbi Tatz's brain surgeon lead to any significant role reversal. These women are, of course, privileged in that they have domestic help which ensures that they are exempt from some of the drudgery of housework. Moreover their financial needs are adequately taken care of. Nevertheless the exaltation of the woman's role in accordance with contemporary Judaic attempts at ideological reinterpretation counts as a further and important explanation for that choice.

- 1 Ohr Somayach is the name of the congregation of Ultra-Orthodox Jews in Johannesburg whose spiritual leader is Rabbi Dr. Akiva Tatz, a physician who studied in a kollel (an advanced community for Jewish studies, for married students) in Jerusalem. He has returned to Johannesburg temporarily. All the religious women interviewed in this study are members of the Ohr Somayach Community.
- 2 Bleich, D.J., Contemporary Halakhic Problems, (Kitav Publ. House, Yeshiva Univ. Press, N.Y., 1977), Pg. 13.
- 3 Ibid, Pg. 14.
- 4 Tatz, A, Anatomy of a Search, (Mesorah Publ., Ltd., New York, 1987), Pg. 88.
- 5 Ibid, Pg. 89.
- 6 These views are explained on a tape entitled "Marriage! Mystical and Practical", by Dr. Tatz, issued by the Ohr Somayach.
- 7 Brayer, M.M., The Jewish Woman in Rabbinic Literature (1986) Pg. 148.
- 8 Talmud(ic) - refers to the body of academic discussion and judicial administration of Jewish Law.
- 9 Greenberg, B., On Women and Judaism: A View from Tradition (The Jewish Publication of America, Philadelphia, 1981), Pg. 108.
- 10 Ohr Somayach tape.
- 11 The Midrash refers to the legends and ethics which add meaning to the Scriptures.
- 12 These mystical ideas are complex and this study does not attempt to do them justice. This mystical view of creation is related as an illustration of the importance of marriage in Jewish thinking.
- 13 Hesed is that character trait which Judaism believes must underlie all interpersonal relationships. It is the basis of all Jewish ethics. It is the ability to give to another out of a sense of closeness and identification with that other's needs.
- 14 Dr. Tatz believes that human beings have been given the capacity to destroy the Universe or to complete the creation process as God intended.
- 15 Meiselman, M.M., Jewish Women in Jewish Law, (Yeshiva Univ. Press, 1978), Pg. 26.
- 16 Ibid, Pg. 23.

17 Meiselman, M.M., Jewish Women in Jewish Law, Pg. 119.

18 Yediah means knowledge.

19 The concept of onah is in marked contrast to the western concept of marital duty, where there is the implicit assumption that marital relations are a husband's right and a wife's duty. Jewish tradition insisted that it is the duty of both parties, but special emphasis is placed on the husband's duty. The wife's duty to her husband is one of the responsibilities contractually assumed by both parties during the marriage. The husband's duty is an explicit command of the Torah and hence is not subject to prenuptial waiver.

20 Meiselman, M.M., Jewish Women in Jewish Law, Pg. 119.

21 A mikvah is a ritual bath.

22 The only reason that a wife is permitted to ask for a divorce is if her husband does not satisfy her physically. This is a Talmudic law.

23 Niddah - menstrual separation laws.

24 The practice of niddah - abstention from married sex for a period after menstruation - was described by Dr. Ruth Westheimer, the noted sex protagonist, as "the most sophisticated method of maintaining libido in long-term monogamy I have ever encountered". This quote is from an article entitled "Jewish Method Builds Libido", Zionist Record, (17/8/1990).

25 Ibid. "Being Jewish is a great help to me in my work as a sex therapist, ...The Jewish attitude to sex is incredibly enlightened. There is a passage in the Midrash which states that it is the husband's obligation to provide his wife with food, shelter and sexual gratification. anyone who thinks the female orgasm was invented in the '60's should think again. Our sages got there first."

26 Meiselman, M.M., Jewish Women in Jewish Law, Pg. 26.

27 The stringent adherence to these laws by Ultra-Orthodox Jews accounts for the manner in which they exist in society within the parameters of their own value system.

28 Kashrut is the observance of certain dietary laws.

29 Greenberg, B., On Women and Judaism; A View From Tradition, Pg. 43.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### CASE STUDIES

It is necessary, prior to documenting the interviews carried out in this study to clarify certain issues regarding the nature of this particular piece of research and some of the limitations and parameters which apply to this study and to research methods in general, and feminist research in particular.

The research method chosen for this study is the qualitative method. This involves the technique of question and answers in order to arrive at detailed descriptions of the lives of subjects. It attempts to describe the lives of subjects holistically. Examples of qualitative methods are oral history, experiential analysis, participant observation and case history. The interpretation of the data is held to be subjective. The alternative method is known as the quantitative method. This involves the use of questionnaires. Responses in this method are quantified and analysed as numerical values. This method has as its aim the testing of hypotheses. Claims are made that the results of this method are objective. In considering the value of these two methods of research for the feminist community, Toby Jayaratne<sup>1</sup> says that in the past several years there has been considerable debate in feminist circles regarding the merits of traditional research in the social sciences and the quantitative methodology in particular. She says that many feminists argue

that traditional research in the social sciences is used as a tool for prompting sexist ideology and ignores issues of concern to women and feminists. Some feminists, therefore, have suggested that qualitative research is better suited to reflect the nature of human experience.

Qualitative data - whatever method is used - do convey a deeper feeling for or more emotional closeness to the persons studied. A detailed account of an individual's struggle against oppression is more emotionally touching than a research report giving statistical evidence of the struggle of a group of individuals. For example, ethnographic accounts of representatives of oppressed groups are very effective in instilling empathy for those individuals ...Case histories and other accounts in similar style have always been interesting and appealing to many readers. None the less, the interpretation of qualitative data is subjective and therefore open to all of the biases inherent in subjective assessments.<sup>2</sup>

In order that cognizance should be taken of the possibility of bias in this particular investigation it is necessary to note that the researcher is a Jewish, Liberal Feminist, married, professional and has raised four children into adulthood, having experienced the motherhood-career conflict at first hand. These facts may arguably give greater insight into the lives of the subjects insofar as they might promote a greater intimacy between the interviewer and her subjects.

Regarding the use of the interview as a method of research, it is necessary to comment on the nature of the interviews used in this study. Ann Oakley<sup>3</sup> suggests that there are problems in the paradigms of traditional interviewing for feminist interviewers whose primary orientation (as is the case in this

study), is towards the validation of women's subjective experiences as women and as people. She says that the traditional criteria for interviewing portray the interviewing situation as a one-way process in which the interviewer elicits and receives, but does not give information. She says that this situation is absurd. As Roberts puts it,

Oakley illustrates the absurdity of this situation through a discussion of the questions her respondents 'asked back'. Second, textbooks advise interviewers to adopt an attitude towards interviewees which allocates the latter a narrow and objectified function as data. Third, interviews are seen as having no personal meaning in terms of social interaction, so that their meaning tends to be confined to their statistical comparability with other interviews and the data obtained from them.<sup>4</sup>

Considering the above comments, it must be stated that the interviews in this study were conducted informally, without a structured questionnaire and took the form of informal conversations, resulting in a two-way exchange of information.

The size of the sample chosen is in keeping with the fact that this study is a mini-thesis, constituting only a part of the Master's degree. This study may be viewed as a pilot study which might point the way to a more detailed and extensive investigation. Given the small sample used, no generalized claims can be drawn. The concern, however, within the framework of a qualitative research programme, was to gain an understanding of why these women chose to live according to the tenets of Ultra-Orthodox Judaism. Since they voluntarily adopted Ultra-Orthodox Judaism they are unlikely to be

critical of its tenets. Their voluntary choice, however, testifies to the value they attach to that ethic. It is possible that they experienced certain conflicts which they did not communicate to the investigator. This might become apparent if a larger sample were investigated in greater depth than the parameters this study allows.

### Case One

She is a young woman in her early thirties who is the mother of seven children, ranging from twelve years to about three months of age at the time of the interview. She is a qualified doctor with a partially completed speciality in nuclear medicine - she discontinued specializing after the birth of her third child.

She was interviewed in her study, which is a large room lined with books from floor to ceiling, and in the centre is a table surrounded by comfortable chairs. We sat at the table and talked while the children played elsewhere in the house. At some stage the eldest child came into the room to tell her mother that the baby was awake and a friend of Case One's who was present during the interview went to see to the child while we continued talking. The infant was brought into the room and the mother held the baby in her arms while we talked.

Case One had come from a traditional Jewish family. They did not keep a kosher home and only attended synagogue occasionally. She turned to Orthodox Judaism during her

second year at medical school when she found difficulty accepting that there was no more to life than ending up as a cadaver on a slab in a medical school dissection hall. She wanted answers that were more than she could find in the scientific world and she says that she found these answers in Judaism. She finds no conflict between Judaism and her scientific career.

On the question of whether she felt she was vegetating as a result of not pursuing her career in the public sphere, she pointed to the books around us and told me that they are not there for decoration. She said that she kept up with her medical career by reading a great deal - current medical journals, and so on - and that she did a great deal of voluntary work, from a medical point of view, within the community. In this way she could "work" when it suited her as her family and her children were by far the most important factor in her life. When questioned about whether she missed "working" in the public sphere her retort was that there was no "job" which she could have pursued where she would have the opportunity of influencing and shaping the lives of seven people in the way she was able to influence her seven children. She said that she felt responsible for their socialization process and she thought that this was decidedly the most exciting and important thing that she could ever do.

She does not keep a television set in her home because she does not approve of some of the values, particularly the

violence, and she thought that her children would obtain far more pleasure from books than they would from television. During the entire interview, which lasted for about an hour, we were only interrupted once by one of the children (probably a four year old) who came in to show his mother something that he had been playing with, and for the rest of the time I was not aware of the fact that there were seven young children in the house. Her home is considered as a central meeting place in the community. She is very much involved in the communal activities of the women in her community. Case One was someone with a very strong personality. She appears very confident in herself and her life's purpose.

The interview with her was illustrative of the practice of the Jewish belief in knowledge for the sake of knowledge. She did not feel that her education was "wasted" simply because she was not, at present, using it to earn money. She said that the acquisition of an education had helped to equip her in her child-rearing tasks and had also enabled her to assist other women in her community in a manner which she would otherwise not have been able to do.

#### Case Two

Case Two was a young woman of twenty-three who had a baby of three months old. She is a Speech Therapist by profession who had completed her studies after her marriage and was working to pay back a loan which had enabled her to study. Ideally she would have preferred to stay at home at this stage of her

life and look after her baby but for financial reasons this was not possible, so she brought the baby along to work with her as she was still breast feeding. Next year she would be working mornings only and would be leaving the baby in the care of a domestic worker. Her eyes filled with tears when she told me about this arrangement as she said that she was very concerned that she would miss out on some elements of the baby's development, but she hoped that the child would sleep for a large part of the time that she was away.

Case Two had been raised in a non-kosher, traditional home. She had attended the local Jewish day school. She said that she had been religiously influenced by a particular young Rabbi whom she had met during her school-going years. She left home to study at a University in another town and there she had met a family who had befriended her and introduced her to some Ultra-Orthodox young people. After attending some of their study groups she found, gradually, that she wanted to become involved in a religious way of life. Her husband is the son of a very charismatic and influential Rabbi who lives overseas and teaches at a Yeshiva.<sup>5</sup> Her husband is one of nineteen children, born of one woman, (all single births) and this young woman regards her mother-in-law as someone to be highly respected for her role as mother to this very large family. She said that her mother-in-law had once been asked how she managed to divide her love between all her children and her reply was that her love was not divided by the children - it was multiplied. Case Two's husband, who is

thirty years old, is the eldest of the nineteen children who were raised in a flat and for twelve years of his life he shared a bed with one of his brothers. The mother of these children had never been responsible for the disciplining of these children - that was regarded as the father's role. There were still nine children living at home and Case Two said that family gatherings were a great joy and that all the children, married or single, showed great respect for their parents. She also told me that the Rabbi (her father-in-law) helped his wife, not only to look after the children but was an excellent cook and assisted her a great deal with the running of their home. He considered himself to be a very wealthy man as he felt that his children were a far more important blessing than any material wealth could be. This did not, however, detract from the desirability of material wealth which is regarded as a blessing from God. There was therefore no shame attached to using one's wealth for pleasure or however one desired just as long as one gave away ten per cent to charity and was always aware that material wealth was not something for which one was responsible oneself, but that it was God-given.

Case Two spent most of our interview explaining the laws of niddah (family purity) which she had found to be a very positive facet of her religious life. She explained that family purity was of such prime importance in Judaism that it was incumbent upon a Jewish community to build a mikvah (ritual bath) before they built a synagogue. She described in detail the ritual attached to the attendance of the mikvah

with the emphasis on relaxation (one must relax in a bath for a minimum of half an hour before going to the mikvah) and bodily cleanliness. She was very positive about the psychological effect of the twelve days of physical separation from the husband. She said that during this time, because no physical contact of any sort was permitted, the husband and wife communicate on a level other than the physical and it gives them a chance to allow their relationship to grow in directions other than the physical. She also said that the abstinence from sexual relations ensured that there is, for her, a regular monthly renewal of appreciation of the physical side of the relationship. She spoke with enthusiasm about the return from the mikvah when both husband and wife knew that this was the time that they could be together physically.

When questioned about her husband's role in the home, she said that he helps her a great deal, not only with the care of the baby, but that before the baby was born, when she was studying for her honours degree, she would return home late on a Friday afternoon to find that he had prepared the meal, set the table, and that everything was ready, waiting for her to light the candles. She said that he did this very willingly because the Friday night meal is important to them and he felt that it did not matter who did the preparation, as long as it was done. This young woman experienced Judaism as a decided enhancement of married life and motherhood. She has a very warm, responsive and loving nature and she finds legitimacy for the wholehearted expression of these attributes in marriage and motherhood.

Case Three

Case Three was a twenty-four year old woman and the mother of a six-month old baby. She is a Psychiatric Social Worker who runs a private practice from her mother's home. Her mother is also a social worker by profession, and gained her qualification after her children were grown up. She spoke of her mother with a great deal of love, warmth and respect.

I was invited into her study-cum-consulting room which was a book-lined room furnished with comfortable chairs. I sat while she spent most of the interview carrying the baby - sometimes sitting, and at other times standing, in an effort to amuse the child who was not readily distracted, but at no stage did she become irritable or annoyed with the baby. She alternated between conversing with me, and making comments to him, in an effort quietly to keep him amused, which she did very successfully. At one stage she seated herself and offered him her breast, but he was not interested. When she stood with the child she moved constantly with a gently swaying movement to keep the child happy. He seemed very heavy but she seemed quite comfortable with this arrangement.

Case Three's involvement with Orthodox Judaism began shortly prior to her marriage. She had attended the Jewish Day School but was raised in a non-kosher traditional home. After matriculating she went to Israel where she attended a Yeshiva (religious college) for a couple of months. At the time she

had a boyfriend (whom she subsequently married). She sees her involvement with Judaism as an ongoing, learning experience and she said that she finds that the more she learns, the more involved she becomes. She says that she has had an influence on the lives of her parents, who, although they are not religious, give her a great deal of support for her lifestyle. She feels that her mother was an example to her that a woman can "have it all". Case Three feels that her involvement in Judaism gives her a greater realization of the worth of her role as a mother than she may otherwise have had. She said that the most wonderful thing that had ever happened to her was giving birth to her child. Motherhood had brought out qualities in herself which she never knew she had. She regards her child as an extension of herself and through him she feels that she will grow in worth as a human being. When I questioned her about placing the child in child-care she said that she would never do that unless she was compelled to. While she is able to, she wants to spend as much time as possible with her baby. She said that she would be devastated if she missed out on any noteworthy aspect of his development.

She was very involved in the voluntary work of her community and continued with her profession by working around the baby's routine. She said that she was fortunate to have her mother's assistance, professionally, and with the baby. On questioning her about her husband's role in the family, she said that he is very willing to assist her.<sup>6</sup>

Case Four

Case Four, unlike the other young women I interviewed, had attended a secular day school and came from a Reformed Jewish home. She said that when she was growing up she knew far more about Christianity than she knew about Judaism. She is in her early twenties and has a baby of approximately one year old. She is pregnant with her second child. She said that her involvement with Judaism began after she had completed her schooling and went overseas. As a result of an error in travel plans, while she was visiting Israel, she found herself, quite unintentionally, at a Yeshiva College. She spent a couple of months there and found that what she learnt there opened up a whole new world for her. She has a degree in English Literature and is at present working on a Master's Degree. Up to the time she spent at the Yeshiva she had always been searching for answers to the meaning of life and she had unsatisfactorily explored numerous artistic and philosophical avenues in this regard. She had always felt that religion, (as she understood it, prior to her involvement with Ultra-Orthodox Judaism) and some of the other ideologies which she had come across, were hypocritical. She found that there was an enormous gap between ideals and reality - between what people said they believed in and what they practiced. In Ultra-Orthodox Judaism, however, she said that, because the law affected every minor aspect of daily living, she is able, for the first time, to life her life as an expression of her philosophical beliefs. She said she had always been an

individualist, and something of a loner, and that through Judaism she has found a new meaning in human relationships.

#### Case Five

This interview was with a woman of approximately fifty years of age. I had originally phoned her daughter and when I explained what I wanted to speak to her about, she very enthusiastically said that she thought that her mother would be an ideal person to interview. With great pride, the daughter explained that her mother was highly intelligent, that she was busy with her doctorate and that she would be very worthwhile interviewing. I duly contacted her and interviewed her in her home. She was a social worker by profession who had been born into a family of immigrant parents (from Eastern Europe). Her parents had come to South Africa, as had so many immigrant Jews, fleeing the anti-semitism of Europe. They settled outside a small town where her father ran a trading store. Her mother tried against great odds, to keep a kosher home, and she, as a child, was sent to boarding school for the duration of her school career. After qualifying as a social worker she married a pharmacist and went to live in a small town in the Transvaal. While raising her children she met a Rabbi who had a very strong influence on her thinking and through his influence she began to study Judaism. She attended his lectures once a week and found herself becoming more and more interested in the wealth of knowledge about the religion which she had always adhered

to but never fully understood. As she learnt more and more, over the years, so she became more committed to Judaism as a way of life, replacing the values of the secular world in which she had been raised. She allowed her children the freedom to practise the religion to the degree that they wished. She kept a kosher home but left it to them to decide what they wanted to eat outside the home. The only rule which she applied unbendingly was that pertaining to Friday night - she insisted that the children should stay at home on a Friday and participate in the Sabbath meal. Her husband has only recently become seriously committed to Judaism as a way of life. Previously he had participated in a somewhat half-hearted manner. Her three daughters, all of whom are now married, are religious, although they were not always that way inclined. One is now married to a Rabbi.

Case Five has always been involved in voluntary work in her community but at the same time has always had a job in the market-place. She found difficulty in obtaining work as a social worker in the small town in which she lived after her marriage and as it was necessary for her to work she took a job as a sales representative and she has been doing this job for many years now - working when it has fitted in with the schedule of her family life. She is adamant that her children always take priority over any other activities or interests in her life. She said that no matter what she was doing she always made time to communicate with her children if they needed to talk to her and as a result, her children are not

only her children, they are also her best and dearest friends. Her involvement with Ultra-Orthodox Judaism has been gradual, over a period of many years, and is an intellectual as well as a practical involvement. She spoke very positively about the dignity that she finds as a woman in Judaism and said that the laws of modesty pertaining to Judaism inhibited the treatment of women as sexual objects. She is convinced that the family purity laws have a positive effect for women in marriage.

### Case Six

Case Six was a young woman who had recently qualified as a doctor and was about to enter marriage. She came from a home where she was aware of Judaism as a tradition and philosophy. She experienced feelings of conflict over what she should do with her life after marriage, regarding the prospect of having a child and pursuing her career. To give up her career after six hard years of study, in order to stay at home and care for an infant was something which is difficult to contemplate, within the values of western society. She finds however, as a result of some contemporary Ultra-Orthodox Jewish friends that the conflict is made easier within the value system of Judaism. As a result of this awareness she says that she will more readily temporarily put aside her career to care for a prospective infant without feeling self-sacrificial or apologetic about the role. She has decided to adhere to the laws of family purity as she is convinced that they are a protection against the human tendency to become bored with familiarity in relationships. As a result of her awareness

and understanding of certain halakhic laws, she will be able to enter into an understanding with her husband regarding their finances so that she will not have to ask for money for personal or household needs. Money must be placed in a bank account for her use, and she must always be provided for proportionately to his income so that she should never be made to feel that he is doing her a favour by supporting her financially. She said that she will be able to do this as she feels very strongly about the importance of motherhood. The understanding must be that their marriage is a partnership and that what she brings into it cannot be weighed or measured in material terms. She said that her appreciation of what family life has meant to her has made her want to perpetuate it in spite of its general decline in western society.

The answers to the questions reproduced on the following pages, represent summaries of the important themes which underlay the conversational interview situation.

1. They were asked how they felt about feminism.

The women do not profess to have been exposed to a great deal of information regarding feminist theory. They regard feminism as a movement for the benefit of women in society. In these terms they all see themselves as being in favour of feminism as a goal, but say that there are differences between feminism and Judaism in the means of attaining this goal. They regard themselves as feminists, but regard the main

difference between their notion of feminism and Judaism as being the difference in understanding of the term equality. They accept that they are different from men but they do not see this difference as demeaning. On the contrary they regard themselves as having qualities which they feel men to not have. They feel that their role as mother gives them very specific advantages over men. Their suggestion is that no matter how good and devoted a father a man may be, he will never experience giving birth to a child and breast-feeding it. They consider the experience of motherhood to be a very special blessing. Instances in the Torah were quoted as examples of women's superiority over men in certain ways.

For example, the fact that God spoke to Sarah, in order to influence Abraham, is, according to their interpretation an indication of the recognition of women's influence over men.<sup>7</sup>

This is further evidenced by an extract from the Talmud:

How decisive a woman's effect can be upon the life of her husband is emphatically pointed out in this passage: "It is related of a pious man who was married to a pious woman that, being childless, they divorced one another. He went and married a wicked woman and she made him wicked. She went and married a wicked man and made him righteous. It follows that all depends upon the woman."<sup>8</sup>

They feel very positive and approve of the effect that the feminist movement has had on women's lives in the public sphere by minimizing discriminatory legislation against women and by providing greater economic opportunities for women in a variety of fields. They feel very favourably disposed towards feminism as they understand it to mean a movement to eliminate

discrimination against women. They feel, however, (and this would not be acceptable in terms of most feminist approaches), that the fact that they have different responsibilities and different roles from men does not make them inferior - on the contrary, the general impression that they give is that they feel superior through their differences. They suggest that the bonds that exist between women as a result of the fact that they are separated from men at social and religious functions, are very conducive, in their view, to a feeling of sisterhood. They sit together in synagogue and they dance together at weddings and other such functions and their feelings on this issue of separation from men is that it strengthens the bonds between women. They do not experience the competitive element which often exists between certain women when they are in the presence of men and, this, they feel, brings them closer to other women.

2. Their feelings regarding their status and that of their husbands in marriage was discussed.

On this issue they were all adamant that marriage is a partnership between two people, both different, but neither one superior to the other. They regard marriage as an opportunity to become "complete". They said that the experience of living with another human being, intimately, as people were expected to do in marriage, required a great deal of compromise and that through compromise they felt that they were able to develop a dimension of their own personalities which would otherwise lie dormant.

Some of the women had higher academic qualifications than their husbands. Two examples of this are the medical doctor and the woman who is studying for her doctorate in sociology. They do not feel that this discrepancy is of any consequence to their relationship because, in their view, marriage is a partnership where two different people bring to one another qualities which enhance each other.

3. The issue of financial dependence on a husband during periods of child-bearing and child-rearing was dealt with.

They all feel very secure about the financial arrangements which they have with their husbands. They said that because their husbands are all observant Jews they are aware of their financial obligations towards their wives, and, most importantly, they are aware that they should never allow their wives to be humiliated by asking for money. Case Two quoted the following from the Talmud to illustrate the manner in which marriage is viewed in Judaism:

The ideal of matrimony, which is inculcated by the Talmud, is of the highest. ....'Who loves his wife as himself, honours her more than himself, leads his sons and daughters in the right path, and arranges for their marriage soon after puberty, to him the text refers, "Thou shalt know that thy tent is in peace" (Job v. 24) ... 'Honour your wife, for thereby you enrich yourself. A man should be ever careful about the honour due to his wife, because no blessing is experienced in his house except on her account'. 'A man should spend less than his means on food and drink for himself, up to his means on his clothes, and above his means on honouring his wife and children, because

they are dependent upon him, while he is dependent upon Him Who spoke and the Universe came into being.<sup>9</sup>

4. They were asked whether or not their husbands assist with domestic chores and child-care.

Because one is dealing here with a relatively privileged class of white, professional, South African women, it was generally not necessary for the men, or the women, to wash floors and clean toilets on a daily basis. All the women, however, said that their husbands willingly assist them, particularly with regard to caring for the children when they need help. They all said, however, that the prime responsibility of caring for the children was theirs - the degree of help varied from family to family.

5. Finally, they were asked about their attitude to the family purity laws.

On this issue they were unanimous. They all regarded these laws as advantageous to women. Firstly, they explained that sexual relationships in Judaism are directed towards the needs of the woman and not the man. They backed this claim by explaining that a woman may ask for a divorce if her husband does not satisfy her sexual needs. For instance, the period of abstention is governed by the woman's bodily function, not the man's, and he must regulate his behaviour accordingly.

They do not regard it as demeaning that as a result of biological differences women use the mikvah on a regular basis while men only use it when it pleases them. They regard the mikvah as a very relaxing and enjoyable experience, often accompanied (particularly prior to marriage) by great joy and celebrating with other women, family and friends. They see the experience of the mikvah not only as a personal, intimate experience, but also as a religious experience which unites them in a common feeling with other women.

Concerning the twelve days of separation, physically, from their husbands, during menstruation and thereafter, they reported that they found this separation a very positive experience. They said that it allowed them time with their husbands when they were not viewed as sexual objects, but as companions.

This story from the Midrash <sup>10</sup> illustrates the importance of the idea of hesed as the basic Jewish ethic. The story relates to the Jewish perception of Heaven and Hell. Hell is depicted as a group of people, seated around a table which is laden with food. They all have in their hands large forks with which to feed themselves, but the prongs of the forks are so long that they are unable to reach into the food and place it in their mouths - the forks are longer than an arms length and the people sit around the table, in the presence of the food and starve.

Heaven is depicted as the same place, with people seated around the same table, laden with the same food and provided with the same forks. In heaven, however, the people are happy and well-fed - they are feeding each other with the long forks.

1 Jayaratne, T.E., "The Value of Quantitative Methodology for Feminist Research", in Bowles, G. and Klein, R.D., Theories of Women's Studies (Routledge, London and New York, 1983), Pg. 145.

2 Ibid, Pg. 145.

3 Oakley, A., "Interviewing Women : A Contradiction in Terms", in Roberts, H., Doing Feminist Research, (Routledge and Kegan Paul, U.K. 1981), Pg. 38.

4 Ibid, Pg. 30.

5 A Yeshiva is a religious place of study.

6 As is the case in many white, middle-class homes, a domestic servant does most of the household tasks such as cleaning floors, toilets, etc.) and that he considers it very important that he should be involved in raising the child as he feels it is imperative that he should leave his mark and exert an influence on the child's thoughts and values.

7 Examples that they gave were Sarah, Rachel and Rebecca in the Torah.

8 Cohen, A., Everyman's Talmud, (Schocken Books, N.Y., 1975) Pg. 160.

9 Ibid, Pg. 164.

10 The Midrash constitutes the legends and ethics pertaining to Judaism which were used to illustrate and find new meaning in addition to the literal one in the Scriptures.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### CONCLUSION

It is well-documented that, despite the successes that the women's movement has had in the public sphere regarding women's rights and opportunities, legally and economically, the lot of the women in the private sphere remains an area where abuse and exploitation still persist.

The practicalities of liberation - that's what women have to deal with now. The movement got us to where we are, but now how do we live with it? We've broken through to get these jobs women never had before. How many of us, how long, on whose terms? What do you do about life, children, men, loneliness, companionship, the need to have a real home - things no one thought about when we were so obsessed with liberating ourselves? Women in the next decade have to find solutions for the practical problems, niches for themselves that feel more comfortable. We've gone through the metamorphosis. We're not worms any more, but we're not butterflies yet either.<sup>1</sup>

Freidan contends that for many women life in the private sphere has probably worsened relative to the improvements in conditions in the public sphere.<sup>2</sup>

Motherhood as a relationship, an occupation, an institution, or whatever one may choose to call it, is filled with pleasures, pains, anger and tenderness.<sup>3</sup> It is with motherhood that this dissertation is concerned, and the manner in which a particular group of women, namely Ultra-Orthodox Jewish, professional women come to terms with it in a patriarchal society.

There are differences between the manner in which liberalism and Judaism perceive and define the public/private spheres and it is suggested that these differences affect women's perception of themselves. The reason for this is because these differences of perception and definition affect the value system of society. The suggestion is that the lack of legislation in the private sphere is partially resultant from the political interpretation of these spheres.

The conceptual and ideological system which together forms the Aristotelian-power politics paradigm serves to perpetuate an arbitrary bifurcation between that which is politics and that which is not and to promote an ideology which severs politics from coherent moral consideration and moral issues from that which is explicitly political (public).<sup>4</sup>

Feminist theory, over the years, has provided a variety of reasons and possible solutions for the improvement of women's situations in both the private and the public sphere and enormous strides have been made in western society regarding the attempt to eliminate sexism. Within the ideologies of feminist theories such as socialist, Marxist and radical feminism there are a variety of possible solutions to some of the problems which women continue to experience in modern western society. Some of these theories would postulate revolutionary changes to society as we know it today. As valid and relevant as these theories may be, it is not within the reference of this study to consider anything other than liberal feminist theory which exists within and recognizes the contemporary capitalist system.

Connected with the difference in conceptions of how radically domestic life needs to be changed are other differences concerning how radically nondomestic life needs to be changed. Liberal feminism has tended to accept the basic structures of existing political and economic institutions pressing hardest on the need to make them accessible to women. This contrasts with the leftist perspective present in varying degrees in radical feminism and strongly in Marxist feminism which sees such institutions as hierarchical, competitive, and individualistic.<sup>5</sup>

The hypothesis expressed in this study is that as a result of certain economic and political developments there has been a devaluation of the home and family life in western society.

Industrialization did not mean only a change in the place where productive activities took place; it involved a fundamental change in the nature of familial relations. The family, to a large extent, ceased being a unit of production.....In short, a market economy based on wages and payment for factory-produced goods undermined the necessity of the family as a means of survival.... this has brought about an increased individualization of social life, with individuals replacing families as the basic social unit.<sup>6</sup>

Further to the above, Hoffnung suggests that one of the main reasons that women experience conflict regarding motherhood is because of the change in the value system of western society.

But there is no way to accomplish these changes on a large scale without a change in social values. Our society does not value children. They are viewed as enjoyable objects, necessary to complete a family, but not as valuable or inspiring members of society. There is little recognition on the part of adult society that children contribute something special to the family, the neighborhood, and the community. Children traditionally were valuable as additional productive members of the family; now they are costly. Women traditionally had few options outside of marriage and motherhood, but they were important economic

contributors to the family. Now women have more options, but there is no place for kids in the lives of two independent spouses - unless they share responsibilities. That requires a change in social values.<sup>7</sup>

It has been argued that as a result of this devaluation the role of motherhood is reduced in status and therefore women who care for their own children suffer from lack of self-esteem. This is evidenced by the fact that it has become increasingly difficult for young, professional women to make choices between caring for their infants or pursuing their careers.<sup>8</sup> The conflict is heightened as a result of the greater opportunities which are available for women and the concurrent and resultant devaluation of the role of mother and housewife. Status in western society is directly linked to achievement in the public sphere.

A study by Davies and Welch indicates that the evidence is that:

wb  
// } It is not the mothering of small children or motherhood per se that leads to the feelings of ambivalence on the part of mothers: it is the mothering under a certain set of conditions (in the isolation of the nuclear family) and with a particular set of beliefs about womanhood and motherhood that leads to conflict and loss of self.<sup>9</sup>

In this regard it is suggested that the ethic of individualism (as it is understood in liberalism) is not as conducive to good relations in the private sphere of human relations, such as between mother and child and husband and wife as is the ethic of Judaism, that is hesed. In the recent article in The

Natal Mercury, entitled "Working on Marriage", the following was published concerning attitudes within marriage:

Studies have shown that one of the characteristics happy marriages most commonly share is the ability of husband and wife to recognise each's hidden qualities and nurture them. Experts agree that the Number One goal of a marriage should be improvement and growth - both as individuals and together as a couple. The more one trusts the relationship the more one will feel free to change within it. The idea of mutual education and growth within a marriage represents a turning away from some of the me-first values of recent decades.<sup>10</sup>

It is argued in this study that there are two factors inherent in liberal feminism which may contribute to the fact that women's situation regarding marriage and motherhood remains problematic for some women in modern western society. The two factors are, firstly, the value system of western capitalism and the individualistic ethic of liberalism, and secondly, the fact that there is inadequate legislation in modern western society to protect women from exploitation within the private sphere of marriage.<sup>11</sup>

Concerning the legislation of the private within the parameters of liberal thinking, Jaggar sees the problem for liberal theorists as being the necessity to devise social institutions that will protect each individual's right to a fair share of the available resources while simultaneously allowing him or her the maximum opportunity of autonomy and self-fulfillment.

Liberal answers to this dilemma are framed traditionally in terms of justification and delimitations of the power of the state. For the state is the institution that liberals charge with protecting persons and property and, simultaneously, with guaranteeing the maximum freedom from interference to each individual.<sup>12</sup>

THE STATE  
ON POWER  
PROTECTION  
+ FREEDOM

The feminist movement evolved alongside the political movement of liberalism and then flourished with the Civil Rights Movement in the United States. It has used political ideologies as its main means of emancipating women. Efforts to end discrimination against women have been modelled on legislation against political, economic and race discrimination. This is effective in the public, political sphere but has not been effective in the private sphere where abuse continues largely outside the realm of jurisdiction. The particular areas of concern which need to be redressed for women today are those pertaining to physical and sexual abuse of women generally and economic exploitation by men of women during child-bearing and child-caring years. Oakley suggests that two of the main reasons that these abuses persist, or perhaps worsen, is firstly because of the value system of western society and secondly the lack of legislation in the private sphere. Oakley suggests<sup>13</sup> that the reason for the failure of the feminist movement to achieve certain improvements in the private sphere is rooted in the value system of the public sphere. She says that ".... under capitalism women have been put in charge not only of humanity's lowest needs, but also of its highest necessities. This is not recognised by male-dominated culture (by men or women). Women's work, because it doesn't enhance self-

development, is seen as inferior.) Hence women's chronic low self-esteem: their proness to depression, and the problem of 'underachievement'. It is difficult to reverse these dominant values. Nevertheless it is essential, if we are to see what is unworkable about the prevailing model of sex equality. A female utopia - a world in which women know they are doing good - cannot occur within the prevailing value system."

The difference between the value systems of Judaism and that of liberal feminism, as operative in western capitalism, allows a comparison between the two regarding attitudes to motherhood. It was evident from the interviews that ultra-  
\* Orthodox Jewish women feel valued for their roles as mothers and as a result of this they pursue motherhood with a relatively positive attitude. There is no suggestion in this study that the solution which these women have found is in any way practical as a universal solution to women's problems of motherhood, career, isolation, male dependence and sexual abuse. The intention of this study is to examine some of the attitudes of these mothers and career women who have voluntarily opted for a way of life which seems to be in complete contrast to some of the options which would be available to them in modern western society. From a feminist point of view it would appear that these women have been "conned" into an acceptance of a patriarchal system which ensures that they still have the major burden of housework on their shoulders and carry the main responsibility regarding the caring for children. Nevertheless, as has been argued,

their status as wife and mother has be reinterpreted and is exalted in the level of ideology. The purpose of the study, however, is not to deal with the power of the patriarchal order of western society, and the variety of forms in which it presents itself, nor to suggest universally applicable solutions. This study is a description and comparison of the attitudes of certain Ultra-Orthodox professional Jewish women regarding particular problems in western capitalist society which, it has been suggested, liberal feminism fails to address adequately.

Oakley<sup>14</sup> suggests that men's position in the public world outside the home always puts them 'on top'. The contention is that male dominance ensures that the standards of humanity and social participation to which women aspire are those of men. Since female activities, resources and values are ignored in this ideological transformation, very little will be achieved. A few women will gain access to male positions, but the situation of most will remain unaffected. It is a question of how women see themselves. Are having and rearing children, and a sense of emotional connection with, and responsibility for others, capacities that women must be liberated from in order to become human - that is to become equal to men? She ponders the question of why one talks about the "underachievement" of women in public life outside the home, rather than about the "under-achievement" of men in the home, with children and also in personal relationships.

The concept of equality, and the political and personal

connotations attached to the word in the public and private sphere was another term which was viewed comparatively in this study regarding the different interpretation of the term within liberal feminism and Judaism. It is a contentious concept and was seen as being relevant to the manner in which these Jewish women viewed their role. For them "equality" does not necessarily mean "same".

Elshtain<sup>15</sup> regards equality as one of the most nettlesome concepts in political life and thought. She defines equality as a "cluster concept" around which political life is focused, and suggests that constants over its range of applicability help to constitute the activity of politics.....The historic experience of the liberal democracies demonstrates that equal rights neither entails nor necessarily conduces towards full political equality. In Elshtain's view an equality of opportunity formula pushes Feminist analysis away from an examination of the oppression of classes of persons, male and female. She says that if, however, the focus shifts from a consideration of "rights" or "opportunities" to be a concern with what persons are (or ought to be free to become) an understanding of the obstacles which militate against the emergence of persons thus conceived is facilitated. In her opinion the adoption of equality of opportunity as the rallying cry for a Feminist movement must ultimately be seen as undermining the range of moral claims a version of equality of treatment or respect would affirm or validate.

I return, therefore, to the second of the two meanings of equality as description which is, in turn, tied to equality of respect. An empirical

presumption for equality requires the analyst to seek those social arrangements, relations and institutions which will promote, encourage and preserve equality of respect and treatment.... The problems of thinking about equality along the entire range of its possible appreciation are by no means solved in their (Rowbotham and Mitchell) analyses and crucial questions remain unanswered.<sup>16</sup>

Contingent on the concept of equality and its interpretation regarding role differentiation, it has been suggested by some theorists that there are differences in power structures within relationships which should be taken cognizance of when evaluating women's situation in the family.

As soon as the presence of power in all relationships between men and women is recognized and their articulation with the formal state apparatus examined, a completely new light is shed upon the whole issue. As Oakley has it, while the traditional wife-mother-housewife role 'is correlated with certain types of powerlessness, it also has its own avenues of influence'.<sup>17</sup>

Further evidence regarding the conflict of roles for men and women in the public/private sphere is discussed by Randall<sup>18</sup> who suggests that as the value of women's contribution to both public life and to the family purse is incontrovertibly established, so men will come under increasing pressure to share domestic chores. She says however, as they concede with this approach, in the short run it will serve to lower still further the status of child-care and housework, making them less not more attractive to men (Adams and Winston, 1980). She sees a contradiction between women asserting the value of 'parenthood' and family life and their demanding public policies to reduce their domestic burden. There is no simple

solution to the question of the relationship between women's liberation and motherhood.

The women's movement is moreover far too diverse in its membership and too decentralised to produce any single answer. But as the political backlash and growing female unemployment threaten to drive women back into domesticity whether they will or not, it is an issue feminists will find increasingly difficult to ignore.<sup>19</sup>

That it may be of relevance to feminist thinking to have explored and described some of the issues and situations of specific women, as was done in this study, is expressed by Hooks in the following lines:

Between women, male supremacist values are expressed through suspicious, defensive, competitive behaviour. It is sexism that leads women to feel threatened by one another without cause. While sexism teaches women to be sex objects for men, it is also manifest when women who have repudiated this role feel contemptuous and superior in relation to those women who have not. Sexism leads women to devalue parenting work while inflating the value of jobs and careers. ...

Hooks makes the point that

The fierce negative disagreements that have taken place in feminist circles have led many feminist activists to shun group or individual interaction where there is likely to be disagreement which leads to confrontation. Expression of hostility as an end in itself is a useless activity, but when it is the catalyst pushing us on to greater clarity and understanding, it serves a meaningful function. Women need to have the experience of working through hostility to arrive at understanding and solidarity if only to free ourselves from the sexist socialization that tells us to avoid confrontation because we will be victimized or destroyed ..... Women do not need to eradicate difference to feel solidarity. We do not need to share common oppression to fight equally to end oppression. We do not need anti-male sentiments to bond us together, so great is the wealth of experience, culture, and ideas we

have to share with one another. We can be sisters united by shared interests and beliefs, united in our appreciation for diversity, united in our struggle to end sexist oppression, united in political solidarity.<sup>20</sup>

- 1 Friedan, B., The Second Stage, Pg. 71.
- 2 Ibid, Pg. 71.
- 3 Rich, A., Of Woman Born (Cox and Wyman, Reading, 1991).
- 4 Elshtain, J.B., Politics and Society - 1974 - "Moral woman and Immoral Man: A Consideration of the Public-Private Split and Its Political Ramifications." Pg. 453.
- 5 Nicholson, L.J., Gender and History (Columbia Univ. Press, 1986), Pg. 20.
- 6 Ibid, Pg. 3.
- 7 "Motherhood: Contemporary Conflict for Women", Hoffnung, M., Pg. 135 in Women: A Feminist Perspective ed. by Freeman, J., 1984.
- 8 This problem is explored in the writings of Friedan, Hewlett, Matthews, Oakley, Rowbotham, Ree, Mitchell and Elshtain.
- 9 Davies, B. and Welch, D'arne, "Motherhood and Feminism: Are They Compatible? The Ambivalence of Mothering" ANZJS Vol. 22, No. 3, November 1986, Pg. 411.
- 10 The Natal Mercury, 13 December 1990.
- 11 These issues are addressed in feminist ideologies, such as socialist, Marxist and radical feminism, where, by definition, one would be looking at a value system which differed from capitalist individualism and where the legislation of the private sphere is advocated. These theories, however, are not considered within the confines of this dissertation.
- 12 Jaggar, A.M., Feminist Politics and Human Nature, (Sussex, Harvester, 1983, Pg. 33.
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- 14 Ibid, Pg. 394.
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  - Case Three : Age - Mid-twenties - Psychiatric Social Worker - one child.
  - Case Four : Age - Mid-twenties - teacher - studying for M.A. in English Literature - one infant.
  - Case Five : Age - Early fifties - Social Worker - studying for Doctorate in Sociology. Three married daughters, grandchildren.
  - Case Six : Mid-twenties - Doctor - newly married.

**MOTHERHOOD, MARRIAGE AND CAREER :**  
**SOME LIBERAL FEMINIST AND SOME ULTRA ORTHODOX**  
**JEWISH VIEWS**

by

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of Masters of Arts (Women's Studies)  
University of Natal.

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**SOME LIBERAL FEMINIST AND SOME ULTRA**  
**ORTHODOX JEWISH VIEWS**

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**ABSTRACT**

A comparison is made between the manner in which motherhood is perceived from a liberal feminist point of view within the patriarchal framework of modern western society, and the way in which it is viewed in ultra-orthodox Judaism among middle-class women. In considering some aspects of motherhood and marriage, a comparison is made between the ethics of liberal feminism, rooted as they are in liberal ideology, and the ethics of ultra-Orthodox Judaism. The problem of the exploitation of women during child-rearing and child-bearing years, as a result of financial dependence on an individual man, and the lack of legislation and protection for women in the private sphere regarding physical and mental abuse in marriage, is considered and compared with that of ultra-Orthodox Judaism where the private sphere is religiously legislated.

## PREFACE

Participation in the Women's Studies course created an awareness in me of certain divergent theoretical approaches to feminism that prevail today and stimulated a particular interest in liberal feminism. Despite thirty years of activity and marked progress and success in the political or public sphere, there remain within the parameters of liberal feminist thinking, facets within the private sphere which are still considered by certain liberal feminists to be problematic for some women. Motherhood and career conflict, and male dependence during child-bearing and child-rearing periods are some of the issues referred to. This study is a description of the attitudes and practices of a small group of ultra-Orthodox Jewish women who contend with motherhood and career choices in a manner which is largely prescribed by their religion. The hypothesis in this study is that a comparison between liberal feminist ethics, within the framework of western, capitalistic democracy, and the ethics of ultra-Orthodox Judaism indicates certain differences which are perhaps relevant to women's attitudes to motherhood. The comparison, as carried out in this study, is only relevant within the parameters of liberal feminist theory. The reason for this is that alternative feminist theories such as socialist, Marxist and radical feminism embody ethics and ideologies which differ somewhat from that of liberalism and would therefore not be similarly comparable. These other ideologies would offer

theories and propositions which would not be ideally operable within the framework of the status quo, unlike both liberal feminism and ultra-Orthodox Judaism. An aspect of this study is a consideration of the fact that, unlike modern western capitalist democracy, where there is little legislation pertaining to what is understood as the private sphere, the private sphere in ultra-Orthodox Judaism is subject to religious law dictating the behaviour of the people within marriage. Some of these laws regarding the treatment of women are perused, particularly those in relation to sexual behaviour in marriage. The recognition and discussion of the problems defined in this study are carried out in the spirit of Women's Studies.

As Bowles has pointed out

Women's Studies emerged out of a political movement and very practical concerns. To pose the problem first and then devise the method has always been our way and I would not like to see these origins in experience change. For me, then, the choice of the problem is crucial. (Of course, this assumes an ability to recognize problems.) For me that means what do we need to know in order to survive? (This takes us to such 'problems' as nuclear power and ecology.) And, if we do survive, what do we have to know in order to live relatively peacefully and happily together? (This takes us to such 'problems' as the relationships between people of different sexes and races and classes.) Now these are very large questions and very political ones. They are quite unlike most of the questions the academic disciplines are asking now. Yet our concepts of Women's Studies force these questions upon us. These are the

questions which are real to us, we who are both scholars and members of the women's community. Our constant reassertion of this link, a vigilance, even, will help to keep women's studies from becoming just another academic discipline, removed from the daily worlds of all of us.<sup>1</sup>

Unless indicated to the contrary in the text, this dissertation is representative of my own work.

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1 Bowles, G. and Klein, R.D. ed. Theories of Women's Studies (Routledge London, N.Y. 1983) Bowles, G. "Is Women's Studies an Academic Discipline?"

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## INTRODUCTION

In elucidating and evaluating the attitudes of Ultra-Orthodox Judaism towards motherhood and child-rearing, a comparison will be made with some of the attitudes and concerns of certain well-known liberal feminists with regard to<sup>1</sup> these issues.<sup>2</sup>

Liberal feminism is, of course, simply one of the modes of modern feminism. Its use in this thesis as the one pole of comparison therefore needs to be explained. First to deal with all the strands of feminism would entail going beyond the nature and scope of this thesis which is part of course-work for a Masters degree. At the same time, it is argued that the position of liberal feminism, especially insofar as it advocates a distinction between the private and public spheres, makes it especially appropriate as a contrast to Ultra-Orthodox Judaic law which penetrates the private realm, regulating all aspects of the relationship between women and men. It is, of course, true that radical feminism and Marxist feminism could equally be used as a basis of comparison,<sup>3</sup> but the fact that liberal feminism addresses itself specifically to middle class women endorses the perspective chosen, given that the Ultra-Orthodox women selected as case studies are themselves members of that class.

Liberal feminism has made enormous strides in improving legal and economic conditions for women in the public sphere, but has failed to eradicate certain problems in the private

sphere. It is with some of these problems and the manner in which they are dealt with by married Ultra-Orthodox Jewish women that this study is concerned.

Two main issues concerning women in marriage will be considered here. The first is that western society attaches low status to housework and child-care. This study is concerned with middle-class, white South Africans. The situation in South African society is aggravated because housework and child-care are tasks which are usually carried out by lowly paid Black women, thus increasing the reluctance of many men to become involved in these tasks. Ultra-Orthodox Jewish women opt for motherhood as a priority, although they frequently simultaneously pursue careers. They live with a value system which has motherhood and child-rearing as its highest spiritual level. The contention is that this spiritual elevation serves to diminish their conflict between motherhood and career.<sup>4</sup> In modern western society, status and prestige are measured by success in the public sphere. Motherhood and family life do not rank high, therefore, within this value system, on the ladder of esteem. Some of the economic and social conditions which have led to this devaluation will be explored.

Because the home had gained an array of new functions by the early 19th Century a cult of domesticity came into being. Because the home represented values antithetical to those of market capitalism, domesticity fuelled reform energies in the antebellum years. Because the home enjoyed such esteem in the culture, women could use it to justify their activism in the public sphere. But even as the word 'home' was being invoked by both men and women in their pleas for various reforms

in the late nineteenth century, its capacity to play this overarching role was being undermined: the institution of the American home itself was in rapid flux, and the society that came into being during the Gilded Age made much of the context for the ideology of domesticity obsolete.<sup>5</sup>

2. The second facet which will be considered is that of legislation. Western society, given its liberal ideology, fails largely to legislate behaviour in the private sphere.<sup>6</sup>

By contrast

The Jewish religion is unique in that it controls and regulates every phase of daily life. Its rules of conduct regulate dealings with people, every-day actions, the conduct of one's private life and home.<sup>7</sup>

Every facet of personal life and personal relationships are legislated for in halakhic law.<sup>8</sup> The pressure to abide by halakhic law is exerted by the fact that it is believed by observers to be divinely inspired as it emanates from the Torah.<sup>9</sup>

Liberal feminism and Judaism will briefly be defined and the historical origins and certain ideological tenets of both will be considered. Aspects of the two philosophies pertaining to specific areas concerning motherhood and family life will then be examined. The specific issues which will be dealt with are the concept of equality, attitude to marriage and child-care and the isolation of the woman in the nuclear family in urbanized Western society. The problem of financial dependence on an individual male during child-rearing and child-care, the concepts of public versus private and finally the issue of sex within marriage will also be discussed.

Six interviews form the basis of the empirical part of this dissertation. Ultra-Orthodoxy was voluntarily adopted by five of the abovementioned women in their adult years. They are all professionally qualified. The sixth interview was with a young, newly-qualified doctor from a traditional Jewish home (not Ultra-Orthodox), who had adopted some of the ethics of Judaism in an effort to cope with the conflict which she anticipates will arise between career and the prospect of motherhood. She intends using the family purity laws as she feels that they may obviate some of the common problems encountered in marriage regarding sexual relationships.

Many women experience a great deal of conflict over whether to pursue their careers or take care of their infants.<sup>10</sup> Young women today have, as a result of the success of the feminist struggle and also of a variety of economic, technological and scientific innovations (such as sophisticated birth control measures), gained a degree of freedom and a variety of lifestyle choices far beyond the wildest dreams of the previous generations. Desirable though they may seem, these choices are often the cause of great conflict in the lives of mothers. A considerable amount of literature has been produced on this subject<sup>11</sup> and although the general contention seems to be that adequate and affordable child-care facilities would provide one answer to this problem, it is contended that it is not true that all women desire that alternative. Moreover, although one finds that inadequate child-care facilities may be a problem in America and Europe, this is not the case in South Africa where most middle-class professional women would

not have much difficulty in obtaining adequate child-care in the form of a domestic worker in their own home. For some women, however, child-care is not the issue. The issue is in parting with their children - they want to care for them personally but they experience great conflict regarding this situation largely because child-care has a very low status in western urban society, and also because it places them in a position of economic dependence - usually on an individual male. It is because these women feel that Ultra-orthodox Judaism reduces some of these conflicts that it has been chosen as a life-style despite its seemingly anti-feminist and patriarchal image.

1 The feminist views which will be considered are specifically those of Friedan, Hewlett, Matthews as they are expressed in The Second Stage, (Sphere Books, London, 1983) - Just A Housewife (Oxford Univ. Press N.Y. 1987) and A Lesser Life (Michael Joseph, 1987) respectively. The work of Tong, Jaggar and Neustatter will also be referred to.

2 The aspects of Judaism which will be considered will be confined specifically to those dictates of the religion which pertain to marriage, sex and motherhood.

3 The Radical feminist slogan that "the personal is political," and Marxist feminism's criticisms that the liberal feminists' distinction between mental and manual work is a social construction ultimately serving the interests of the middle classes clearly provide foci for other comparative studies.

4 Davies, B and D'arne Welsch, "Motherhood and Feminism: Are They Compatible? The Ambience of Mothering" ANZJS Vol. 22, No. 3, November 1986.

" - it is not the mothering of small children or motherhood per se that leads to the feeling of ambivalence - it is the mothering under a particular set of conditions and beliefs about womanhood and motherhood that leads to conflict and loss of self."

5 Matthews, G., Just a Housewife, Pg. 92.

6 In S.A. there is no legislation guarding against rape in marriage - it is still under discussion - The Natal Mercury, April 24, 1990 and The Natal Mercury, February 14, 1990.

7 Goldin, D.H. The Jewish Woman in Her Home, (Hebrew Publ. Co. N.Y., 1941) - Pg. 72.

8 Halakhah is the rabbinical law which governs every aspect of daily life in Judaism.

9 The Torah is the entirety of Jewish law and knowledge and is considered to be God-given.

10 Friedan, B., The Second Stage, Hewlett, S.A., (1983).  
A Lesser Life, Matthews, G., Just A Housewife (1987).

11 Friedan, B., The Second Stage, Hewlett, S.A., (1983).  
A Lesser Life, Matthews, G., Just A Housewife (1987).  
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CHAPTER ONE

LIBERAL FEMINISM'S VIEW ON MARRIAGE AND MOTHERHOOD

Three decades of feminism still finds certain feminists agonizing over the dilemma of motherhood.

It is not just feminists who are confused about motherhood; the received images in a male-defined culture contain their own contradictions. A pregnant woman is both weak and powerful, sick and serene within the iconography ... seeking change in the circumstances of fertility and childcare has led to a radical search for alternative social possibilities both in terms of changes in relationships and division of activity and in demands for greater access and control over the resources of society."<sup>1</sup>

Women continue to suffer rape and assault within marriage and many women are exploited by husbands during their years of child-bearing and child-raising, as a result of their financial dependence during these periods. Sheila Rowbotham suggests that women's liberation, as a movement, created a political space in which women were able to consider motherhood as an option and not a prescribed fate.

{ A formative tenet of the women's movement has been that there should be a conscious decision whether or not to have a child.<sup>2</sup> }

Given this freedom of choice, however, there is still evidence to indicate that, having chosen motherhood as an option, many women are placed in situations in which they are as vulnerable and open to exploitation by men as they were prior to the existence of the feminist movement.<sup>3</sup>

Further, regarding financial dependence on men, Raya Levin for example has argued that,

For working-class women, their feminism depends basically on them having a choice between working on terms which are acceptable to them, and being mothers without being dependent on men. This is what I felt so much at Holloway. What they needed was financial independence. They said they couldn't put up with having to coax the man round to getting a new coat - the humiliation - they would rather pinch it. They were not conformist women, they could bring it out much more openly. They didn't want to have to sweeten him up in order to get what they wanted. One could put it in a very simplistic way by saying that mothers should get a wage for looking after children and everybody else should contribute to a fund; all males and all female non-parents, i.e. all non-mothers, should contribute to this fund. Looking after children, bringing up children - women who want to do it - it should be open to them. Some or even many may not want to do it. But if they want to do it they should not have to fall on individual men.<sup>4</sup>

This study is not concerned with the prospect of revolutionizing society through feminist ideology. Its concern is with women who deal with the reality of being mothers and having careers and the conflict and frequent exploitation that results from this situation of dependency in modern western society for women who choose to care for their children themselves during their children's infancy.

To define feminism in very broad terms is a fairly simple task. It may be described as a commitment to end woman's subordination. When it comes to a detailed analysis of how the basis of that subordination is explained, however, the definition becomes more complex. Bell Hooks says that

A central problem within feminist discourse has been our inability to either arrive at a consensus of opinion about what feminism is or accept definition(s) that could serve as points of unification. Without agreed-upon definition(s), we lack a sound foundation on which to construct theory or engage in overall meaningful praxis.<sup>5</sup>

Despite the tremendous legal and economic strides that have been made by liberal feminists in particular for the benefit of many women, there is still difficulty in defining what it is that feminism stands for, and for many women feminism has not meant "emancipation".

In order to understand liberal feminism as we find it today, it is essential to know something of its roots. Liberalism, the philosophy of the emerging middle classes, had as its brief the issue of human rights, the freedom of individuals to choose, and the notion of equality which was defined in legal and civic terms. The liberal conceptions of the state saw its role as the protection of these rights in order to allow the maximum opportunities for individuals to exercise their capacity for rational choice and self fulfillment, reason being accorded the greatest value in society. The limits which liberalism therefore set to the state's authority were defined in accordance with the distinction between the public realm, within which legislation was required to ensure the protection of rights, and the private realm, held to be exempt from state intervention. In accordance with the value placed on reason, manual work was considered by liberals to be less valuable than the use of one's intellect, or reason, a

distinction which was in keeping with liberalism's historical association with the middle class.

Feminism emerged alongside liberalism in 19th century Europe and America finding fertile ground in the belief that individuals are free and equal and should be emancipated from the existing hierarchical bonds of tradition. Although these ideals and aspirations were originally confined to the political and legal front and considered relevant to men, it did not take women long to seize the opportunity to adopt the language of equality and emancipation. Although the term "feminism", was only coined in the late 19th century, its first seeds were sown and its first shoots became evident with the writings of Mary Wollstonecroft as early as 1792 with her the treatise, Vindication of the Rights of Women published in Britain.<sup>6</sup> In America, feminism was born alongside the movement to abolish slavery in the 1830's.<sup>7</sup> It was this struggle for equal human rights in both continents which stimulated the desire for equal status for women. Political analysts have regarded the main catalyst for feminism as being the extension to women of philosophical notions about the rights and responsibilities of the individual and the ideal of the 'natural' sexuality of all human beings, although these initially excluded women. But the philosophy of individualism which nurtured the ideal of the importance of self, was adopted by feminism as a justification for the elimination of the subordination of women. Early liberal feminists saw their task as relatively straightforward. Since traditional liberal

theory ascribed rights to persons on the basis of their capacity to reason, early feminists had to argue for women's rights by showing that women were indeed capable of reason.<sup>8</sup> Alison Jaggar characterizes liberal feminism as a logical extension of traditional liberalism.

It accepts the traditional liberal conception of human nature and the characteristic liberal values of individual dignity, equality, autonomy and self-fulfillment. It also accepts the liberal ideal of creating a society which maximizes individual autonomy and in which all individuals have an equal opportunity to pursue their own interests as they perceive them.<sup>9</sup>

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In the early years of feminist politics, in spite of strong opposition from both males and females to the changing of traditional male-female roles in society, feminists saw the realization of many of their claims and demands in the public sphere. This was probably because they were in accord with the general trend of social and political developments at the time. Feminists of the so-called first wave in the 19th century therefore focused mainly on education, on women's right to property, on married women's rights and, in particular, on the vote. Indeed early feminists, including Wollstonecroft and John Stuart Mill, held the illusion that universal suffrage would emancipate women. That this was not the case is evidenced by the fact that today, in spite of a second wave of feminism which accompanied the political demands for human rights in the 1950's and 1960's, women's aspirations at achieving equality, freedom, or emancipation with regard to their situation in the private sphere have fallen short of expectation.

After 1920, feminism lay dormant for about 40 years until the re-awakening in the 1960's with the founding of The National Organization for Women by Betty Friedan and her followers. The twentieth century brought with it an awareness that discrimination on the basis of biological factors such as skin colour and sex need not be tolerated, and the struggle against racial differentiation and discrimination grew hand in hand with the fight against sexual discrimination. This time, however, there was an ingredient which assisted women in their struggle for equality with men, giving them a new-found possibility of freedom and a choice of whether to procreate or not - the advent of more advanced contraceptive technology. The impact therefore of industrialization, which had the effect of removing many traditional female functions from the home, coupled with capitalism and its accompanying ethic of liberalism and individualism, and the new-found freedom brought by contraception, provided women with a readiness and opportunity to apply equal rights doctrines to themselves with fervour. At the same time, however, one saw the effect of the capitalist "work-ethic" alter the perceived values of supposedly non-productive occupations such as housework and child-care, resulting in lowered self-esteem for people performing such tasks. It is arguable that this devaluation of the home, caused largely by the redundancy of the family as an economically productive unit, has served to denigrate the role of motherhood and child-care. Friedan in her book, The Feminine Mystique (1963),<sup>10</sup> deals precisely with this state of affairs. In interviewing many middle-class with American

women, Friedan showed that despite living their lives which supposedly exemplified domesticity, these women were, unhappy unfulfilled and expressed feelings of low self-esteem and isolation. This work therefore seemed to confirm the liberal feminist argument that women could not find fulfillment in the private sphere. Friedan advocated as her solution to the "problem with no name" that women enter the public sphere. In so doing she effectively further devalued motherhood and did not address the issue of how women could simultaneously pursue both career and motherhood. Her views are in accordance with liberal feminism's acceptance of the dichotomy between the public and private spheres. Housework and the care of children are regarded as unskilled and therefore not involving the full use of women's rational faculties. While liberal feminists devalue domestic work, they argue that self fulfillment will be achieved through the exercise of reason in the public sphere.

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Friedan's identification of the "problem with no name" reflected some of the changes which had affected the lives of middle class women in the domestic sphere. In Just a Housewife, Glenna Matthews suggests that marriage has not always been regarded as a liability for the man and as a sort of favour conferred upon woman, involving for her a life insurance for a minimum premium. It was regarded as a necessity for all, both for their personal fulfillment and their economic benefit. Only when growing industrialization transferred more and more productive activities from the home to the factory, when machines relieved woman of a great part

of her household duties, and schools took over the education of her children, did woman's economic value as a contributor to the family income decline, particularly in the middle classes.

Where before women and children had assisted in providing for the needs of the family, this responsibility now devolved upon one man. Women and children became an economic liability rather than an asset, and marriage was increasingly felt to be a burden for the man. The emotional satisfaction which it may have offered to both man and woman was not enough to make good the loss of self-respect incurred on women by the knowledge of their economic uselessness. Thus as Glenna Matthews puts it

I started this book (Just a Housewife) with the realization that while American women were relegated to a separate sphere in 1850, it was a sphere that was central to the culture. One hundred years later, most American women were still functioning as housewives in some fashion, but the home was no longer central, and this made the role of housewife much more problematic for those who filled it. In fact by the mid-twentieth century many women had begun to think of themselves as "just a housewife". In 1850 a housewife knew she was essential not only to her family but also to her society. History would be affected by the cumulative impact of women creating good homes. Advice books, popular novels, and even the writings of male intellectuals set forth this theme and elaborated the ideal of the "notable housewife." In 1950, the suburban, middle-class housewife was doubly isolated: physically by the nature of housing patterns, and spiritually, because she had become the general factotum for her family. She was a cog in the economic machine, necessary for the maintenance of national prosperity but overlooked in discussions of the gross national product. The desperate letters sent to Betty Friedan, after she identified "the problem that has no name" - that

is, the emptiness of many housewives' lives - testify to the damage inflicted by the twentieth century version of domesticity.<sup>11</sup>

Liberal feminism's prescription for the emancipation of women has provoked much criticism in contemporary society and in so doing helped to cast doubt on the relevance of liberal feminism for the lives of middle class women.<sup>12</sup> Concerning the application of liberal ideology to women, Jaggar says that

In applying this ideal to women, however, underlying difficulties emerge. Liberal feminists may not confront these difficulties directly but, implicitly or explicitly, their demands raise the questions about the viability of some of the major tenets of liberal theory and even about the consistency of the liberal theory of human nature.<sup>13</sup>

Rosemary Tong discusses the controversy which still pervades much of the feminist thinking regarding the concepts of "equality" and "difference". In a discussion of Friedan's work, she says that in The Second Stage (1983) Friedan reminded her readers that single mothers living on substantially reduced incomes cannot be said to have the same opportunities to compete in the market-place as do women who are fully supported by men. Friedan insisted that if equal opportunity is society's goal, then the government must provide single mothers, as well as widowed and/or divorced homemakers, with an adequate subsidy. Tong suggests that Friedan has been moving away from her 1960's advocacy of gender-neutral laws as the type most likely to achieve equality between the sexes, in the direction, in the 1980's of

more gender-specific laws. Tong notes that in 1986 Friedan joined a coalition supporting a California law requiring employers to grant as much as four months unpaid leave to women disabled by pregnancy or child-birth.

In taking this stand, she alienated those members of the National Organization for Women who believed that to treat men and women equally should mean to treat them in the same way. If men should not receive special treatment on account of their sex, then neither should women. According to Friedan, this line of reasoning, which she herself pressed in the 1960's, is misguided. It asks the law to treat women as "male clones", when in fact there has to be a concept of equality that takes into account that women are the ones who have the babies.<sup>14</sup>

Concerning the issue of applying liberal principles to women as well as men, Jaggar notes that as well as opposing laws that establish different rights for women and for men, liberal feminists have also promoted legislation that actually prohibits various kinds of discrimination against women. She says that such legislation requires that women be equal to men regarding a variety of legal and economic situations. Maternity benefits and the establishment of child-care centers are also issues of concern. Jaggar says that

This historical shift in the focus of liberal feminism, from the emphasis on opposing discriminatory laws to the more recent emphasis on using the law to oppose other forms of discrimination, has some interesting consequences for liberal political theory and for the theory of human nature on which it rests.<sup>15</sup>

Jaggar argues that in spite of liberalism's contribution to feminism the liberal conception of human nature and of

political philosophy cannot constitute the philosophical foundation for an adequate theory of women's liberation. Jaggar draws attention to some of the problems associated with the liberal theory of human nature.

My criticisms have been organized round the overlapping topics of normative dualism, abstract individualism, and rationality. ...One of the fundamental problems that I have identified in liberal theory is its incapacity to provide a substantive conception of the good life and a way of identifying genuine human needs. These questions certainly are not simple; as we shall see, they confront every political theory, including every theory of women's liberation, and it is far from clear that any theory has an entirely satisfactory answer to them.<sup>16</sup>

Tong suggests that liberalism may be wrong to deny the differences between men and women and to press for gender-neutral laws and gender-blind policies. She sees the task of the liberal feminist as being to determine what liberty and equality mean in the lives of concrete men and women and not what liberty and equality are for abstract rational persons. She regards this as a difficult and dangerous task as she considers that the possibility exists that if women as a group are allowed special benefits, they will be open to charges of inferiority, and, at the same time, if all differences are denied, as has often been the case in the women's movement, then she sees the attention from the disadvantages which women labour under as being deflected.

Is there really a way to treat women and men differently yet equally without falling into some version of the pernicious "separate but equal" approach that characterized official race relations in the United States until the early 1960's? Or must liberal feminists work towards

the elimination of differences as the first step towards true equality? If so, should women become like men in order to be equal with men? Or should men become like women in order to be equal with men? Or should both men and women become androgynous, each person combining the correct blend of positive masculine and feminine characteristics in order to be equal with every other person?<sup>17</sup>

With regard to the liberal ethic of individualism, Jaggar says

...liberals do tend towards a general agreement on the probable objects of most people's desire. This agreement results from two assumptions that underlie liberal thought. One of these is the metaphysical assumption of the abstract individualism ... According to this assumption, each human individual has desires, interests, etc. that in principle can be fulfilled quite separately from the desires and interests of other people. The second assumption is ostensibly about the world rather than about human nature. It is that the resources necessary to sustain human life are always limited; in other words, that humans always inhabit an environment of relative scarcity. Given these two assumptions, liberal political theorists tend to suppose that each human individual will be motivated by the desire to secure as large an individual share as possible of the available resources.<sup>18</sup>

The implications for women of the individualistic ethic of liberalism is examined by Tong with reference to Jean Elshtain. Tong refers to Elshtain as a controversial political theorist who has debated with many feminists the nature and function of the family. Although Elshtain's opponents claim that she is a neoconservative intent on redrawing the nineteenth-century boundary between a private "female" domain and a public "male" domain. Elshtain insists this is not her intention. She considers her purpose as being to point out to liberal feminists that their emphasis on the priority of the individual over the community prevents people

from coming together.<sup>19</sup> Elshtain says that there is no way to create real communities out of an aggregate of 'freely' choosing adults. She is dissatisfied with what she perceives as the liberal feminist position on the individual-community balance and this is coupled with her dissatisfaction with what she perceives as the liberal feminist position on so-called "male" values. Tong describes 'Elshtain accusers', such as the Friedan of the 1960's, as equating male being with human being, and manly virtue with human virtue. Tong says that in her critique, Why Can't a Woman Be More Like a Man? Elshtain identified what, in her opinion, were three major flaws in liberal feminism. They were, firstly, liberal feminism's claim that women can become like men if they set their minds to it; secondly, that most women want to become like men; and thirdly, its claim that all women should want to become like men, to aspire to masculine values. She says that Elshtain accepts the view that some sex-based differences cannot be erased overnight without in some way doing violence to the personal identities of the men and women which they transform. Elshtain believes that certain biological and psychological differences between men and women should be recognized

...unless we wish to do what Plato suggested in The Republic - namely, banish everyone over the age of twelve and begin an intensive program of centrally controlled and uniform socialization from infancy onward - we cannot hope, in just a few generations, to eliminate these differences between men and women. In sum, women cannot be like men unless they are prepared to commit themselves to the kind of social engineering and behaviour modification that is incompatible with the spirit, if not also the letter, of liberal law.<sup>20</sup>

Regarding motherhood and child-care, it is very clear, from an historical perspective, that those issues which were discussed earlier relating to the devaluation of the family and the new freedom for women from the biological function of child-bearing, have radically changed the lives of many women. At the same time, however, this has resulted in increased conflict between motherhood and career, particularly in middle class women. The change in women's historical, political reality is that motherhood - which was once her necessity and passive destiny, and which confined, defined and used up her whole life - is no longer necessity, but choice, but even when <sup>not in 2.</sup> <sub>(RSA)</sub> chosen, no longer can define or even use up most of her life. However, liberal feminism has arguably tended not to make that conflict a priority.

Friedan's Second Stage, which stands as an autocritique, may be seen as her move away from her early liberal feminist position. In this work she argued that younger women were experiencing more psychological stress than their counterparts in the 1950's and '60's as a result of conflict and the added stress of pursuing career and motherhood. She suggests that there is a danger in not recognizing the realities of the lives of many millions of women. On the contrary it has arguably intensified the conflict and the prospect of relinquishing career opportunities to take on tasks which are regarded by many people as "mindless" (i.e. child-care and housework) has made this option unappealing for many women.

...these past few years, fulfilling my professional and political commitments, and picking up the pieces of my personal life, for which the women's movement has been the focus for nearly twenty years, I have been nagged by a new, uneasy urgency that won't let me leave. Listening to my own daughter and sons, and others of their generation whom I meet, lecturing at universities or professional conferences or feminist networks around the country and around the world, I sense something off, out of focus, going wrong in terms by which they are trying to live the equality we fought for.

From these daughters - getting older now, working hard, determined not to be trapped as their mothers were, and expecting so much, taking for granted the opportunities we had to struggle for - I've begun to hear undertones of pain and puzzlement, a queasiness, and uneasiness, almost a bitterness that they hardly dare admit. As if with all those opportunities that we won for them, and envy them, now can they ask out loud certain questions, talk about certain other needs they aren't supposed to worry about - those old needs which shaped our lives, and trapped us, and against which we rebelled?<sup>21</sup>

Friedan's final comment in The Second Stage is that false polarities should be eliminated and that the limits and true potential of women's power should be recognized and utilized in the new human politics that she expects to emerge.

And this new human liberation will enable us to take back the day and the night, and use the precious, limited resources of our earth and the limitless resources of our human capital to erect new kinds of homes for all our dreams, affirm new and old family bonds that can evolve and nourish us through all the changes of our lives and use the time that is our life to enrich our human possibility spelling our own names, at last, as women and men.<sup>22</sup>

There is evidence that Friedan is not alone in her re-examination of some early feminist thinking. Janet Ree is a

feminist who suggests that child-care, which was one of the main cries from the feminist movement to enable women to be free to pursue careers, may not provide solutions for certain women.

I know people have said it's wrong to perceive the early women's movement as being against children and mothering, and I'm not saying it was actively against them. But what I did pick up as being really primary for women was to be yourself in your own right. And for mothers that meant not falling for this so-called myth of motherhood. I completely accepted this line. The demands we formulated like the one for 24-hour nurseries, sprang from those beliefs that mothering oppressed women - and children too, in fact. The assumption was, it wasn't good for children to be too closely identified with the mother, that it was good for children to have working mothers whose lives weren't focused only on them. But there was a clash for me, even though at the time I didn't allow it to surface. I loved family life - I wanted to re-create it along the lines of how my own family had been before my mother died. It was a very conventional aspiration. And really the time was not right for those feelings of the family, not in the women's movement of early seventies - or at least not in the socialist feminist part of it I identified with.<sup>23</sup>

These thoughts are reiterated in the words of Clare Moynahan.

'I feel feminism has taken away the value of being a mother, but it had to be like that because the other thing had been so inbuilt into us. Perhaps we had to scream to be heard. I never felt feminism should be about saying you must not be a mother nor did many of the liberal women I know think that, but for a while I felt ashamed of just being a mother.' ...Turning against motherhood may have seemed an appropriate reaction to some women, but other feminists who had deliberated over this in the early Seventies began to consider the implications of denying themselves children.<sup>24</sup>

Angela Neustatter says that for some women there was a realization that childbearing is the one thing that women have

as uniquely their own, and that they should work harder at drawing men into child-care, or finding other innovative solutions, rather than refusing to participate in procreation. For women who had not altered their theoretical position on the oppressiveness of children in our society, she suggests there began to be an awareness of the positive side of having children, with discussion on how childbearing and the raising of children could be empowering in a world where power was denied them in many areas. One of the suggestions made by Neustatter<sup>25</sup> is that there should be greater involvement of the state in child-care, and consequently, in the private sphere. This is evidence of what Tong describes as a move away from the classical liberal ethic of minimal State intervention in the private sphere, to what she refers to as "welfare" or "egalitarian" liberals, although the latter were not advocating a revolutionary re-organization of society's wealth.<sup>26</sup>

In western urban society the devaluation, economically and politically, of the private sphere has resulted in a situation where there is arguably a need to re-evaluate the existing definition of the two spheres. The desire for the personal to be politicized (evident in some feminist thinking) is indicative of the need to re-examine the manner in which these spheres are defined. Elshtain notes that there are no neatly defined limits on the boundaries of what we regard as political and what is not political. She points out that the boundary shifts in the understanding of what is political and therefore what is public and what is private have taken place

throughout the history of Western life and thought. She contends that if all conceptual boundaries are blurred and all distinctions between public and private are eliminated, no politics can exist by definition.

Feminist analysts, be they radical, liberal Marxist, and psychoanalytic, share one overriding imperative and that is that they would redefine the boundaries of the public and the private, the personal and the political, in a manner that opens up certain questions of inquiry.<sup>27</sup>

At present, in modern western society the area which is understood as private, including the area pertaining to the relationships between husband and wife, parents and children, is subjected to a minimal amount of legislation. The regulation of relationships within this area is reliant largely on the goodwill of the individuals concerned. It is in this regard that one of the main problem areas exists concerning the dependence of women on individual men during child-bearing and child-care. There is evidence of abuse in this connection by men who take advantage of this dependence and this frequently results in untold suffering on the part of unprotected women. Women are often not given adequate money for their personal requirements are frequently subjected to the humiliation of having to ask for money from the man on whom they are dependent. Rape within marriage and a variety of other forms of brutality are not always legislated against in western society because they take place in the private, domestic sphere. In Judaism, however, the private sphere is highly regulated and subject to very strict laws and it is their effects on women that are perused in the following Chapter.

- 1 Rowbotham, S., "The Dilemmas of Mothering" Feminist Review, No. 3. Spring 1989.
- 2 Rowbotham, S., Ibid.
- 3 Friedan, B. Matthews, G. and Hewlett, S., in The Second Stage (1983); Just a Housewife (1987) and A Lesser Life (1987) respectively, explore the dilemma as it occurs in the lives of many women today.
- 4 Levin, R., "Raya Levin" Once a Feminist, Stories of a Generation ed. Wandor, M. (Virago Press 1990), Pg. 51.
- 5 Hooks, Bell, "Feminism: A Movement to end Sexist Oppression" in Feminism and Equality, Ann Phillips (Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1987).
- 6 Wollstonecroft herself inherited a tradition of protest which was first articulated by Christine de Pizan in the 15th century and taken up in the 16th and 17th centuries by writers such as Marguerite of Navarre, Mary Astell and Marie Gournay who participated in the so-called "argument about women." In the 18th century Olympe de Gouge, active during the French Revolution, put forward her famous document, "Declaration of Rights of Women Citizeness"
- 7 In 1848 Elizabeth Cady Stanton set out the injustices suffered by women during the Women's Rights Convention held at Seneca Falls.
- 8 Jaggar, A.M., Feminist Politics and Human Nature, (1983), Rowman & Allanheld 1983) Pg. 34.
- 9 Jaggar, A.M., Ibid, Pg.39.
- 10 Friedan, B., The Feminine Mystique, (1963)
- 11 Matthews, G., Just A Housewife, - 1987 - On the basis of an examination of a vast array of sources, ranging from novels like Huckleberry Finn, Uncle Tom's Cabin and Main Street, to letters, popular magazines, and cookbooks, Matthews sets out to examine what women had and what they have lost in modern times. She argues that the culture of professionalism of the late nineteenth century and the culture of consumption that came to fruition in the 1920's combined to kill off the "cult of domesticity" and led to what Betty Friedan identified in The Feminine Mystique as "the problem that has no name - the emptiness and devaluation of many housewives' lives."
- 12 Liberal feminism does not have a resonance for working class women or peasants but even its solution for middle class women came under scrutiny.
- 13 Jaggar, A.M., Feminist Politics and Human Nature, (1983), Pg. 39.
- 14 Tong, R., Feminist Thought : A Comprehensive Introduction, (Unwin Hyman, London, 1989), Pg. 27.

- 15 Jaggar, A.M., Feminist Politics and Human Nature, (1983), Pg 35.
- 16 Jaggar, A.M., Feminist Politics and Human Nature, (1983), Pg. 48.
- 17 Tong, R., Feminist Thought : A Comprehensive Introduction, (1989) Pg. 27.
- 18 Jaggar, A.M., Feminist Politics and Human Nature, (1983), Pg. 356.
- 19 Compare this with the importance of community life in Jewish Law. Chapter 2.
- 20 Tong, R., Feminist Thought : A Comprehensive Introduction, (1989), Pg. 32.
- 21 Friedan, B., The Second Stage (Abacus 1983), Pg 15.
- 22 Friedan, B., Ibid, Pg. 343.
- 23 Once a Feminist Interviews by M. Andor, Pg.93 (1990).
- 24 Neustatter, A., Hyanas in Petticoats, (Penguin 1989), Pg. 83.
- 25 Friedan, B., The Second Stage (Abacus 1983), Pg 12.
- 26 Tong, R., Feminist Thought : A Comprehensive Introduction, (1989), Pg. 12.
- 27 Elshtain, Public Man, Private Woman, (Princeton University Press, 1981), Pg. 325.

## CHAPTER TWO

### ULTRA-ORTHODOX JEWISH VIEWS ON MARRIAGE AND MOTHERHOOD

In this chapter some of the basic tenets of Judaism, as they pertain to marriage and motherhood are described and discussed. The particular interpretation of Jewish law and ethics which is utilized in this thesis is derived largely from the Ohr Somayach Community<sup>1</sup> in Johannesburg.

Despite the fact that the central core of the Jewish ethic has remained unchanged since biblical times, there is a certain degree of flexibility with regard to the interpretation of some laws. David Bleich says that

Jewish teaching recognizes that two conflicting conclusions may at times, be derived from identical sources by different scholars. Which is correct? Both are correct! If two conflicting conclusions may be derived by the same corpus of law, then both must be inherent therein. In the realm of theory both are correct, both are Torah.<sup>2</sup>

It is this flexibility of interpretation which has allowed young, professional Jews to re-interpret Jewish law in accordance with modern thinking and at times, along the lines of certain feminist principles and attitudes. The interpretation of existing laws have altered, without change in the laws as such.

Although the Torah itself is immutable the sages teach that the interpretation of its many laws and regulations is entirely within the province of human intellect. Torah is divine but "it is not in the heavens." (Deut. 30:12) it is to be interpreted and applied by human beings.<sup>3</sup>

An example of how modern Ultra-Orthodox women have re-interpreted Jewish law to their advantage is evident in the manner in which they carry out the law which prescribes that married women should cover their heads in public. In the past this was an example of discriminatory practice.

A woman's hair is often referred to as her "crowning glory", and the directive to cover the hair after marriage had the effect of minimizing a woman's<sup>a</sup> attractiveness in public. Ultra-Orthodox women today use this directive to their advantage. They abide by the law of covering their heads with scarves and wigs which enhance their looks rather than detract from them which was the case until recent times. This, of course, defeats the purpose for which the law was originally intended.

In Rabbi Tatz's interpretation, the concepts male and female form the complements of any creative process. The male is representative of the source of the spark of inspiration and the female is representative of the power to accept this spark and nurture it, while maintaining it alive as a generative force, into an independent entity which is itself alive and capable of further creation.

The least abstracted model for this interacting duality is the biological relationship between man and woman, and the parallel is not simply an analogy, but is identical to and of the essence of the concept. The male contributes the seminal spark, microscopic in dimension and yet containing the germ of that which is to develop. The female has the ability to hold this speck of almost-nothing within herself and build it, consistently and over an extended period of time, into a

complete life. She contributes its total environment, its nutrition and thus all its physical composition with the exception of the infinitesimally small contribution of the male, she is the source of maintenance of life itself for the concepts, and the transition from dependence to independence as a complete entity, birth, is from her being. ... Maleness tends to the pole of infinite conceptual genesis, femaleness to the pole of the materializing forces, the construction of reality.<sup>4</sup>

Despite this differentiation between maleness and femaleness, Tatz also claims that:

In the practical world there is no pure expression of either maleness or femaleness, both men and women contain elements of each other's identity and their relationship is therefore a complex and tightly interdependent resonance....There is a tremendous respect of each partner for the abilities of the other; each has a power far distant from the realm of the other, a man cannot nurture a pregnancy and give birth and similarly he is not emotionally and spiritually equipped for the non-physical correlates of these activities. Only a fool would argue about which set of function is "better" or envy the other's; a wise person chooses to develop his or her particular sphere of expertise to the maximum and thrives on the complementary function of a partner in a relationship which is an organic unity.<sup>5</sup>

This conception has implications for the roles played by men and women within the family. Rabbi Tatz explains that what is important in a marriage, and in<sup>6</sup> the perpetuation of traditional family life, is that certain functions are performed by certain individuals. This division of labour need not necessarily be based on the biological characteristic of sex. He says that although the generalizations dealt with above, may act as a guideline for role division within a family, it is far more important to allocate role according to

individual talent rather than to the prescribed factor of sex. In his view, if the female partner in a marriage has the ability to "be a brain surgeon", then the male partner should assist her in performing this role and he should take on greater responsibility regarding child-care and other domestic responsibilities. He stresses that what is important is not who performs the roles, or tasks, but that these roles, or tasks, must be performed. For instance, the children must be educated in accordance with certain ethics and principles, and the home must be run in accordance with certain religious regulations, and there should always be a clear understanding of who performs which tasks and there should be no uncalled-for interference by one partner or the other in these spheres of responsibility. Role-division is regarded as imperative in family life, but that it should be based on individual ability, desire and talent, rather than on sex is further evidence of the manner in which feminist attitudes have influenced the interpretation of modern Ultra-Orthodox Judaism.

Perhaps some of the most discriminatory words against women in Jewish lore are contained in the morning prayer recited by men. "Blessed are Thou who has not made me a woman". In the light of the Women's Movement, scholars have therefore tried to explain away that discrimination by focusing on women's role as mother and its attendant blessings in a positive light. Thus, for example, Brayer argues,

Men do not have to suffer physically, as women do, in fulfilling their function of child-bearing and child-raising. When women say their own morning blessing "Blessed art Thou...who has made me according to Thy will," the belief is held that, although the functions of the woman are filled with pain, her recompense is a joy that no man, no matter how tender and loving a father, can experience.<sup>7</sup>

Traditionally the Jewish view of menstruation as expressed in Leviticus was that it rendered woman unclean. Hence the need for the ritual bath or Mikvah which women were obliged to take after seven days in order to be purified or become "clean" again. Feminists have analysed widespread taboos against menstruation in an attempt to illustrate how these discriminate against women. Blu Greenberg shows how Judaism has been influenced by feminist ideas and thus she speaks of "white" rather than "clean", thereby avoiding the connotations surrounding the latter word.

(A word about the use of the term "whites" I do not like the term seven "clean" days, which all of the English sources employ, for it evokes its counterpart, "unclean". I therefore prefer "whites", which is the literal translation of the talmudic<sup>8</sup> "levanim", the white garments that women were required to wear during those seven days in order to facilitate the search for stains.)<sup>9</sup>

While acknowledging the possibility of reinterpretation within Jewish law, it is clear that from a feminist point of view the fundamental tenet that a woman's role is essentially that of wife and mother has not significantly been challenged in any of the examples above. Thus despite Rabbi Tatz's support of the possibility of role models being changed, such a situation

would be the exception rather than the rule. What feminism has done is to provide an approbatory ideology which will presumably reward women for their roles by exalting a woman's status as wife and mother. In the final analysis there can be no question of that traditional family pattern being changed. Judaism is a patriarchal religion and the Jewish family upholds and reinforces male authority. Judaism lays great stress on the family which plays an important role in the perpetuation of the Judaic ethic. It is therefore essential that family unity be upheld. Hence the central role of the woman. But given the advent of the woman's movement Judaism has been forced to acknowledge its impact on the lives of women and especially middle-class Jewish women who pursue careers. Thus it has had to deal with overt instances of discrimination which are supposedly compensated for by an affirming justification of traditional roles.

In an explanation of some of the religious principles of Judaism, Rabbi Tatz notes that Torah values are almost invariably the direct opposite to the values of the secular world. There is a considerable amount of evidence to substantiate this view when one contrasts some of the principles on which liberal thinking for instance, are based, with certain Jewish ethics and beliefs. Two of the basic, or prime tenets of liberalism, are firstly, the importance of the individual and individual rights in society, and secondly, the basic premise that human beings are rational and will behave in a rational manner towards one another, which finds its concomitant in minimal legislation in the private sphere. On

both these issues Judaism holds views which are directly opposite to this manner of thinking. On the first issue, that of individualism and the importance of individual rights, the Jewish belief is held that, although the individual is important, the behaviour of the individual must be governed by an attitude of concern for others rather than for oneself. The concept of individual "rights" is contrasted with a concern for individual "obligations". Rabbi Tatz explains this view as follows.<sup>10</sup> Contracts between people is the ideal constitutional model on which much of Western democracy is based, and it is considered to be a formula for good political and human relationships. It is based on the individual's right to "take" from society what is due to her/him. This involves the individual's rights to free speech, rights to free assembly, rights to property ownership and so on. (There are, of course, obligations as well as rights in western society, but in the Torah there is never a mention of rights, there are only obligations). There is evidence that demands for rights often leads to conflict between groups of people who feel that their rights are not being justly met. The difference between rights and obligations is one of focus. Rabbi Tatz gives an example to illustrate this point in the following story from the Midrash.<sup>11</sup> In Jewish law the relationship between master and servant is defined in terms of obligations. The master has an obligation to treat his servant like a brother and the servant has an obligation to treat his master like a master. The Midrash explains that if the master and servant concentrate on these obligations there

will be harmony. The emphasis on their relationship will be on giving. If they reverse this thinking however, and they concentrate on their rights towards one another, this will result in conflict. The master will demand his rights and dues in the form of how much labour is due to him from the servant, and the servant will concentrate on whether the master is fulfilling his brotherly obligations towards him as a servant and this will inevitably lead to conflict as their prime concern has now been reversed and they are concentrating on rights (taking) instead of on obligations (giving).

The second important area of difference between liberalism and Judaism mentioned earlier is that which concerns legislation and is directly linked to the contrasting belief of the two philosophies regarding the constitution of human nature. It has already stated that liberal thinking regards human beings as rational creatures, capable of regulating their behaviour towards one another without a great deal of legislative interference in the private sphere. Contrastingly in Judaism the belief is held that human behaviour is governed by certain basic desires, namely sex, food and power, and that these urges need to be controlled and legislated in order for there to be harmony in society. There are 613 laws governing people's behaviour in the private and public sphere. The laws are designed to channel basic human traits into acceptable social behaviour which is regarded as beneficial to the perpetuation of the species and the well-being of the community.

Before examining some of the individual laws and concepts pertaining to women in Judaism it is relevant to take cognizance of the interpretation given by Rabbi Tatz as to the mystical interpretation of the origins of the Universe. This interpretation has relevance for an understanding of the religious Jewish view of marriage. Rabbi Tatz explains marriage as an idea which is directly related to the Jewish conception of the Universe as conceived in mystical<sup>12</sup> terms. He describes the creation of man and woman as one of the first things that came about in the creation process. Adam and Eve were created as one being with two faces. They had no back. They requested to be separated so that they could experience the physical pleasure that they witnessed in animals. In answer to this request God ripped them apart, creating the human "back". The "back" has negative connotations. It is, for instance, from the back that excretion takes place. Adam and Eve were then given the task of coming together again as one through their own effort, as opposed to having been given this togetherness as a gift. The word in Hebrew for bride is kala and the root of the word means "complete". They explain that the experience of marriage exists to provide a sense of "completeness". In Judaism therefore the perfection of being human lies in marriage. Rabbi Tatz elaborates on this as follows. The essence of what it means to have a successful marriage lies in the essence of what it means, in Judaism, to be a giver or practice hesed.<sup>13</sup> The idea of being human, according to Jewish belief, is being given the challenge of being a "giver" or a "taker". If one is a "giver" then one

lives spiritually and one is considered successful from a religious point of view and if one is a "taker" and one wants to take from life and from others, rather than give, then it is believed that there is no possibility of success in human relationships or spiritual progress. The understanding is that marriage and parenthood cannot be successful if one bases the relationship on taking rather than giving. God is believed to have created the universe and the task of completion, of creating a perfect world, was left to human beings. A human being's task is regarded as being to do the will of God. In Rabbi Tatz's interpretation this means that a person must make God's will one's own will. Spiritually this means that when God created the Universe he was fulfilling a "desire". Rabbi Tatz says that he uses the word "desire" deliberately as this is where the essence of marriage lies. In any form of creation, desire is the first part of the creative process. If, therefore, one is doing the will of God, one is completing this process and completing the circuit of creation.<sup>14</sup> If however a person does what she/he wants instead of God wants, then one breaks the circuit. This is the root of the mystical idea, held in Judaism, that "give" is to "live" and to "take" is to "die".

The Torah definition of "love" is "give". This contrasts with secular definitions which frequently regard love as a concept of "getting". For instance, the understanding is often held in the secular way of thinking that if someone makes you feel "good" then you love that person. In Judaism the opposite

view is held. The belief is that you must give first in order to love something or someone. You must put something of yourself into the object of love and then you will love. In mystical terms the operation of this thinking is understood as being that if you give of yourself then you will love because you love yourself, and therefore you are giving the most precious thing there is to give. The directive therefore is to give of yourself, not of your material possessions, in order to love and to gain spirituality.

To sum up the Jewish view of marriage, one may say that firstly it is linked to the idea of "completion" as described in the mystical interpretation of the process of creation and also with the idea of giving of oneself in order to love and to emulate God and fulfill God's will. The purpose of describing the Jewish ideas of creation and spirituality is to illustrate that marriage is central to these ideas. The institution of marriage is reinforced as a result of its mystical interpretation in the body of Jewish beliefs.

The notion of hesed has a profound effect on relationships within marriage. Meiselman<sup>15</sup> elaborates on this notion when he notes that hesed is the ability to shift the entire focus of one's concern.<sup>16</sup> Hesed is not performed for the moral pleasure of doing good but rather because of total identification with the troubles and sorrows of other people. He describes two distinct mitzvos which are integral to hesed. The first kind requires the giving of money or other material sustenance to the poor. The second is more intangible. It

requires the donor to feel the pain of the poor and be concerned with their problem. Charity must not be seen as a means for a person's own moral advantage otherwise one will be too concerned with oneself to experience hesed. Hesed requires the merging of one's own concerns with those of one's neighbour so that one no longer thinks only in terms of oneself. Hesed begins with those who are closest to us, first with one's family, and then with one's neighbours. To live alone is to deny the foundation of Jewish ethics and the experience and emotion of hesed. Hesed is required on all levels of human existence and it is demanding of both men and women in the performance of their tasks. It is the practice of this ethic which ensures that women, who are confined to the home as a result of child-care, do not become isolated as is sometimes the case with modern western women in suburbia. The religious directive to be involved in the community ensures that there is always contact with other women, either because one is giving support to someone or receiving it from someone. The belief is that one may not live one's life in isolation.

Sexual relations in marriage are considered to be the highest expression of hesed. The belief is held in Judaism that human beings are uplifted through the union of body and soul. A man is required to maintain regular relations with his wife and satisfy her physically and emotionally.<sup>17</sup> In the Jewish view, sex is not considered a 'sin' on the contrary it is often considered a blessing. The attitude to sex is that it is

neither intrinsically evil nor intrinsically good. People must endow it with these traits. At its highest it is of the greatest purity and sanctity. At its lowest, it may be revolting and obnoxious. To express the essence of the Jewish idea simply, sexual relations are elevated only when they are expressive of a deep and permanent relationship between two people. Because of the high degree of privacy and intimacy they entail, they reflect a unique relationship between the two persons concerned. Sexual relations are permitted only within the marital framework. A husband and wife are understood to be reserved for one another exclusively sexually, and if any aspect of their private relationship is exposed to public view, its intimate nature is believed to be lessened. Within the marital framework, sexual relations are not permitted if either of the partners is not fully committed to the other. For instance if divorce is considered, sexual relations are forbidden. If a couple quarrelled during the day they are forbidden to each other that night because the view is that such a relationship would be purely physical rather than expressive of a deep love. (It is equated with prostitution under such circumstances - devoid of love and merely expressive of selfish gratification - this is not permitted). Similarly, when either party is drunk or asleep, sexual intercourse is not permitted. It is mutual devotion which, as the essential ingredient, raises marital relations to the level of sanctity and purity. Meiselman makes this point.

As R. Menahem Recanti (d. ca. 1290) said 'Had relations been only physical the Bible would not have referred to them by the term yediah.<sup>18</sup> Sex is considered to have three purposes:  
(1) procreation (2) the mitzvah of onah,<sup>19</sup>  
(3) physical.<sup>20</sup>

It is the first two which are considered to endow marital relations with sanctity and purity. In the Torah it is clearly stated that it is the man's obligation to maintain regular relations with his wife and this is ensured through the mitzvah known as onah. Onah requires that a man should have relations with his wife in accordance with the nature of his work. This would depend on whether he was a labourer or whether his work was intellectual - the suggestion is that the labourer would probably indulge more frequently than the man who worked with his intellect as it is considered that intellectual activities drain one's strength. Moreover, a husband is required to have relations with his wife whenever she indicates a desire. Furthermore, whenever he can anticipate her desire, he must have relations without her needing to indicate it to him. Such occasions would include the night that she goes to the mikvah<sup>21</sup> and before he departs for a trip. Another very important facet of these sexual laws is that in addition to establishing the minimum obligation, onah requires a man to ensure his wife's satisfaction.<sup>22</sup>

The laws of abstention from intercourse during menstruation are biblical. The laws of niddah<sup>23</sup> have often come under fire from secularists as being demeaning to women. The women interviewed, however, without exception, all reported that the

laws of niddah are very much to their advantage.<sup>24</sup> They find that the practice of these laws ensures renewed appreciation of sexual relationships each month, and that it is a time to relate to one's spouse as a person and not only a sexual object. The practice of the laws of niddah requires that, amongst other things, the married couple should have a total separation from one another, not even touching one another, for twelve days each month.<sup>25</sup>

It has already been mentioned that one of the contrasts between liberalism and Judaism is concerned with the legislation of the private sphere, resulting from a difference in view regarding human nature. Aside from the Jewish view, which regards legislative control of the private sphere as essential because of the characteristics of human nature, there is also the aspect of Jewish law as being derived from God. God is regarded not only as the one who brought the physical universe into being but also as the source of moral law. In Judaism the moral and physical worlds are interdependent. There is a recognition of the two spheres but they are both sheltered under the common umbrella of Jewish law.

Our tradition teaches us that the moral principles of the Torah were the prearranged plan which determined the patterns of physical creation. The laws of the Torah, tradition continues, preceded physical creation. to realize the moral end of creation, man was fashioned to serve as that being who would bring moral order into the universe. There is, hence, no contradiction between the laws of the Torah and human nature and God is considered the source of ethics.<sup>26</sup>

The facet of Jewish law which affects every minute detail of daily life and human relationships is known as halakhah. Halakhah comprises the 613 precepts which comprises the accepted interpretation of the written laws. Halakhah is not, however, simply a collection of laws. It is a way of living.<sup>27</sup> Although these laws exist independently of the civil laws of a specific government or society and therefore violations of these laws are not punishable in civil law courts, there are nevertheless pressures against individuals who commit offences. Taking into account, however, that the laws are considered by believers to be God-given, this in itself provides a pressure to conform. There are, however, rabbinical courts (Beth-Din) which would listen to complaints about transgressions and would intervene on behalf of the complainant, from the point of view of counselling and chastisement. A Beth-Din constitutes a body of Rabbis who judge and advise on the administration of halakhah. Women and men have recourse to this body if they need assistance in any way regarding problems which they may have in marriage or in other spheres of life. Although in secular society a Beth-Din does not have the power to confine people to gaol, it nevertheless exerts a considerable amount of influence on believers.

For a Jew a life directed by halakhah is as near perfect a way of life as possible. the sum of its parts - observing the Sabbath, Kashrut,<sup>28</sup> giving to charity, having a family, being part of community teaching children, studying Torah, loving God - is infinitely greater than each of the parts ... halakhah is a system that is being perfected continually. Indeed, the rabbinic tradition stresses humanity's role as a partner in

the task of perfecting an imperfect world. One cannot perceive halakhah as a fluid, dynamic system.<sup>29</sup>

The Talmud provides a detailed exposition of a man's obligations towards his wife financially and also provides for the possibility of the working wife. If a woman works she is entitled to keep her earnings. Individual instances, in this regard, were subject to individual rabbinic decisions. The fact that financial dependence on individual men continues to be problematic for many women who are exploited by men during times of child-bearing and child-rearing in particular, is largely obviated in Judaism by the fact that this area of living is strictly legislated. The legal marriage document in Judaism, known as the ketubah, was designed to protect women at times of dependence. Upon marriage a man is obligated to care for his wife both on a personal and a legal level. The Talmud expresses the underlying philosophy of these laws in its directive that a man must spend more money on his wife's needs than on his own. The understanding is that a wife must never, under any circumstances, be put in a position where she has to ask for money. Money, in accordance with the man's income, must be placed at her disposal. This is halakhic law. To have to ask for money is considered demeaning and humiliating.

From a feminist perspective the Ultra-Orthodox Judaic views of woman and her roles as wife and mother count as examples of discrimination. Nevertheless it is important to stress that the women interviewed in this study (all of whom are

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professionally qualified) voluntarily opted to assume the major responsibility for child-rearing within their family situation. In no case did the equivalent of Rabbi Tatz's brain surgeon lead to any significant role reversal. These women are, of course, privileged in that they have domestic help which ensures that they are exempt from some of the drudgery of housework. Moreover their financial needs are adequately taken care of. Nevertheless the exaltation of the woman's role in accordance with contemporary Judaic attempts at ideological reinterpretation counts as a further and important explanation for that choice.

- 1 Ohr Somayach is the name of the congregation of Ultra-Orthodox Jews in Johannesburg whose spiritual leader is Rabbi Dr. Akiva Tatz, a physician who studied in a kollel (an advanced community for Jewish studies, for married students) in Jerusalem. He has returned to Johannesburg temporarily. All the religious women interviewed in this study are members of the Ohr Somayach Community.
- 2 Bleich, D.J., Contemporary Halakhic Problems, (Kitav Publ. House, Yeshiva Univ. Press, N.Y., 1977), Pg. 13.
- 3 Ibid, Pg. 14.
- 4 Tatz, A, Anatomy of a Search, (Mesorah Publ., Ltd., New York, 1987), Pg. 88.
- 5 Ibid, Pg. 89.
- 6 These views are explained on a tape entitled "Marriage! Mystical and Practical, by Dr. Tatz, issued by the Ohr Somayach.
- 7 Brayer, M.M., The Jewish Woman in Rabbinic Literature (1986) Pg. 148.
- 8 Talmud(ic) - refers to the body of academic discussion and judicial administration of Jewish Law.
- 9 Greenberg, B., On Women and Judaism: A View from Tradition (The Jewish Publication of America, Philadelphia, 1981), Pg. 108.
- 10 Ohr Somayach tape.
- 11 The Midrash refers to the legends and ethics which add meaning to the Scriptures.
- 12 These mystical ideas are complex and this study does not attempt to do them justice. This mystical view of creation is related as an illustration of the importance of marriage in Jewish thinking.
- 13 Hesed is that character trait which Judaism believes must underlie all interpersonal relationships. It is the basis of all Jewish ethics. It is the ability to give to another out of a sense of closeness and identification with that other's needs.
- 14 Dr. Tatz believes that human beings have been given the capacity to destroy the Universe or to complete the creation process as God intended.
- 15 Meiselman, M.M., Jewish Women in Jewish Law, (Yeshiva Univ. Press, 1978), Pg. 26.
- 16 Ibid, Pg. 23.

17 Meiselman, M.M., Jewish Women in Jewish Law, Pg. 119.

18 Yediah means knowledge.

19 The concept of onah is in marked contrast to the western concept of marital duty, where there is the implicit assumption that marital relations are a husband's right and a wife's duty. Jewish tradition insisted that it is the duty of both parties, but special emphasis is placed on the husband's duty. The wife's duty to her husband is one of the responsibilities contractually assumed by both parties during the marriage. The husband's duty is an explicit command of the Torah and hence is not subject to prenuptial waiver.

20 Meiselman, M.M., Jewish Women in Jewish Law, Pg. 119.

21 A mikvah is a ritual bath.

22 The only reason that a wife is permitted to ask for a divorce is if her husband does not satisfy her physically. This is a Talmudic law.

23 Niddah - menstrual separation laws.

24 The practice of niddah - abstention from married sex for a period after menstruation - was described by Dr. Ruth Westheimer, the noted sex protagonist, as "the most sophisticated method of maintaining libido in long-term monogamy I have ever encountered". This quote is from an article entitled "Jewish Method Builds Libido", Zionist Record, (17/8/1990).

25 Ibid. "Being Jewish is a great help to me in my work as a sex therapist, ...The Jewish attitude to sex is incredibly enlightened. There is a passage in the Midrash which states that it is the husband's obligation to provide his wife with food, shelter and sexual gratification. anyone who thinks the female orgasm was invented in the '60's should think again. Our sages got there first."

26 Meiselman, M.M., Jewish Women in Jewish Law, Pg. 26.

27 The stringent adherence to these laws by Ultra-Orthodox Jews accounts for the manner in which they exist in society within the parameters of their own value system.

28 Kashrut is the observance of certain dietary laws.

29 Greenberg, B., On Women and Judaism; A View From Tradition, Pg. 43.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### CASE STUDIES

It is necessary, prior to documenting the interviews carried out in this study to clarify certain issues regarding the nature of this particular piece of research and some of the limitations and parameters which apply to this study and to research methods in general, and feminist research in particular.

The research method chosen for this study is the qualitative method. This involves the technique of question and answers in order to arrive at detailed descriptions of the lives of subjects. It attempts to describe the lives of subjects holistically. Examples of qualitative methods are oral history, experiential analysis, participant observation and case history. The interpretation of the data is held to be subjective. The alternative method is known as the quantitative method. This involves the use of questionnaires. Responses in this method are quantified and analysed as numerical values. This method has as its aim the testing of hypotheses. Claims are made that the results of this method are objective. In considering the value of these two methods of research for the feminist community, Toby Jayaratne<sup>1</sup> says that in the past several years there has been considerable debate in feminist circles regarding the merits of traditional research in the social sciences and the quantitative methodology in particular. She says that many feminists argue

that traditional research in the social sciences is used as a tool for prompting sexist ideology and ignores issues of concern to women and feminists. Some feminists, therefore, have suggested that qualitative research is better suited to reflect the nature of human experience.

Qualitative data - whatever method is used - do convey a deeper feeling for or more emotional closeness to the persons studied. A detailed account of an individual's struggle against oppression is more emotionally touching than a research report giving statistical evidence of the struggle of a group of individuals. For example, ethnographic accounts of representatives of oppressed groups are very effective in instilling empathy for those individuals ...Case histories and other accounts in similar style have always been interesting and appealing to many readers. None the less, the interpretation of qualitative data is subjective and therefore open to all of the biases inherent in subjective assessments.<sup>2</sup>

In order that cognizance should be taken of the possibility of bias in this particular investigation it is necessary to note that the researcher is a Jewish, Liberal Feminist, married, professional and has raised four children into adulthood, having experienced the motherhood-career conflict at first hand. These facts may arguably give greater insight into the lives of the subjects insofar as they might promote a greater intimacy between the interviewer and her subjects.

Regarding the use of the interview as a method of research, it is necessary to comment on the nature of the interviews used in this study. Ann Oakley<sup>3</sup> suggests that there are problems in the paradigms of traditional interviewing for feminist interviewers whose primary orientation (as is the case in this

study), is towards the validation of women's subjective experiences as women and as people. She says that the traditional criteria for interviewing portray the interviewing situation as a one-way process in which the interviewer elicits and receives, but does not give information. She says that this situation is absurd. As Roberts puts it,

Oakley illustrates the absurdity of this situation through a discussion of the questions her respondents 'asked back'. Second, textbooks advise interviewers to adopt an attitude towards interviewees which allocates the latter a narrow and objectified function as data. Third, interviews are seen as having no personal meaning in terms of social interaction, so that their meaning tends to be confined to their statistical comparability with other interviews and the data obtained from them.<sup>4</sup>

Considering the above comments, it must be stated that the interviews in this study were conducted informally, without a structured questionnaire and took the form of informal conversations, resulting in a two-way exchange of information.

The size of the sample chosen is in keeping with the fact that this study is a mini-thesis, constituting only a part of the Master's degree. This study may be viewed as a pilot study which might point the way to a more detailed and extensive investigation. Given the small sample used, no generalized claims can be drawn. The concern, however, within the framework of a qualitative research programme, was to gain an understanding of why these women chose to live according to the tenets of Ultra-Orthodox Judaism. Since they voluntarily adopted Ultra-Orthodox Judaism they are unlikely to be

critical of its tenets. Their voluntary choice, however, testifies to the value they attach to that ethic. It is possible that they experienced certain conflicts which they did not communicate to the investigator. This might become apparent if a larger sample were investigated in greater depth than the parameters this study allows.

### Case One

She is a young woman in her early thirties who is the mother of seven children, ranging from twelve years to about three months of age at the time of the interview. She is a qualified doctor with a partially completed speciality in nuclear medicine - she discontinued specializing after the birth of her third child.

She was interviewed in her study, which is a large room lined with books from floor to ceiling, and in the centre is a table surrounded by comfortable chairs. We sat at the table and talked while the children played elsewhere in the house. At some stage the eldest child came into the room to tell her mother that the baby was awake and a friend of Case One's who was present during the interview went to see to the child while we continued talking. The infant was brought into the room and the mother held the baby in her arms while we talked.

Case One had come from a traditional Jewish family. They did not keep a kosher home and only attended synagogue occasionally. She turned to Orthodox Judaism during her

second year at medical school when she found difficulty accepting that there was no more to life than ending up as a cadaver on a slab in a medical school dissection hall. She wanted answers that were more than she could find in the scientific world and she says that she found these answers in Judaism. She finds no conflict between Judaism and her scientific career.

On the question of whether she felt she was vegetating as a result of not pursuing her career in the public sphere, she pointed to the books around us and told me that they are not there for decoration. She said that she kept up with her medical career by reading a great deal - current medical journals, and so on - and that she did a great deal of voluntary work, from a medical point of view, within the community. In this way she could "work" when it suited her as her family and her children were by far the most important factor in her life. When questioned about whether she missed "working" in the public sphere her retort was that there was no "job" which she could have pursued where she would have the opportunity of influencing and shaping the lives of seven people in the way she was able to influence her seven children. She said that she felt responsible for their socialization process and she thought that this was decidedly the most exciting and important thing that she could ever do.

She does not keep a television set in her home because she does not approve of some of the values, particularly the

violence, and she thought that her children would obtain far more pleasure from books than they would from television. During the entire interview, which lasted for about an hour, we were only interrupted once by one of the children (probably a four year old) who came in to show his mother something that he had been playing with, and for the rest of the time I was not aware of the fact that there were seven young children in the house. Her home is considered as a central meeting place in the community. She is very much involved in the communal activities of the women in her community. Case One was someone with a very strong personality. She appears very confident in herself and her life's purpose.

The interview with her was illustrative of the practice of the Jewish belief in knowledge for the sake of knowledge. She did not feel that her education was "wasted" simply because she was not, at present, using it to earn money. She said that the acquisition of an education had helped to equip her in her child-rearing tasks and had also enabled her to assist other women in her community in a manner which she would otherwise not have been able to do.

#### Case Two

Case Two was a young woman of twenty-three who had a baby of three months old. She is a Speech Therapist by profession who had completed her studies after her marriage and was working to pay back a loan which had enabled her to study. Ideally she would have preferred to stay at home at this stage of her

life and look after her baby but for financial reasons this was not possible, so she brought the baby along to work with her as she was still breast feeding. Next year she would be working mornings only and would be leaving the baby in the care of a domestic worker. Her eyes filled with tears when she told me about this arrangement as she said that she was very concerned that she would miss out on some elements of the baby's development, but she hoped that the child would sleep for a large part of the time that she was away.

Case Two had been raised in a non-kosher, traditional home. She had attended the local Jewish day school. She said that she had been religiously influenced by a particular young Rabbi whom she had met during her school-going years. She left home to study at a University in another town and there she had met a family who had befriended her and introduced her to some Ultra-Orthodox young people. After attending some of their study groups she found, gradually, that she wanted to become involved in a religious way of life. Her husband is the son of a very charismatic and influential Rabbi who lives overseas and teaches at a Yeshiva.<sup>5</sup> Her husband is one of nineteen children, born of one woman, (all single births) and this young woman regards her mother-in-law as someone to be highly respected for her role as mother to this very large family. She said that her mother-in-law had once been asked how she managed to divide her love between all her children and her reply was that her love was not divided by the children - it was multiplied. Case Two's husband, who is

thirty years old, is the eldest of the nineteen children who were raised in a flat and for twelve years of his life he shared a bed with one of his brothers. The mother of these children had never been responsible for the disciplining of these children - that was regarded as the father's role. There were still nine children living at home and Case Two said that family gatherings were a great joy and that all the children, married or single, showed great respect for their parents. She also told me that the Rabbi (her father-in-law) helped his wife, not only to look after the children but was an excellent cook and assisted her a great deal with the running of their home. He considered himself to be a very wealthy man as he felt that his children were a far more important blessing than any material wealth could be. This did not, however, detract from the desirability of material wealth which is regarded as a blessing from God. There was therefore no shame attached to using one's wealth for pleasure or however one desired just as long as one gave away ten per cent to charity and was always aware that material wealth was not something for which one was responsible oneself, but that it was God-given.

Case Two spent most of our interview explaining the laws of niddah (family purity) which she had found to be a very positive facet of her religious life. She explained that family purity was of such prime importance in Judaism that it was incumbent upon a Jewish community to build a mikvah (ritual bath) before they built a synagogue. She described in detail the ritual attached to the attendance of the mikvah

with the emphasis on relaxation (one must relax in a bath for a minimum of half an hour before going to the mikvah) and bodily cleanliness. She was very positive about the psychological effect of the twelve days of physical separation from the husband. She said that during this time, because no physical contact of any sort was permitted, the husband and wife communicate on a level other than the physical and it gives them a chance to allow their relationship to grow in directions other than the physical. She also said that the abstinence from sexual relations ensured that there is, for her, a regular monthly renewal of appreciation of the physical side of the relationship. She spoke with enthusiasm about the return from the mikvah when both husband and wife knew that this was the time that they could be together physically.

When questioned about her husband's role in the home, she said that he helps her a great deal, not only with the care of the baby, but that before the baby was born, when she was studying for her honours degree, she would return home late on a Friday afternoon to find that he had prepared the meal, set the table, and that everything was ready, waiting for her to light the candles. She said that he did this very willingly because the Friday night meal is important to them and he felt that it did not matter who did the preparation, as long as it was done. This young woman experienced Judaism as a decided enhancement of married life and motherhood. She has a very warm, responsive and loving nature and she finds legitimacy for the wholehearted expression of these attributes in marriage and motherhood.

Case Three

Case Three was a twenty-four year old woman and the mother of a six-month old baby. She is a Psychiatric Social Worker who runs a private practice from her mother's home. Her mother is also a social worker by profession, and gained her qualification after her children were grown up. She spoke of her mother with a great deal of love, warmth and respect.

I was invited into her study-cum-consulting room which was a book-lined room furnished with comfortable chairs. I sat while she spent most of the interview carrying the baby - sometimes sitting, and at other times standing, in an effort to amuse the child who was not readily distracted, but at no stage did she become irritable or annoyed with the baby. She alternated between conversing with me, and making comments to him, in an effort quietly to keep him amused, which she did very successfully. At one stage she seated herself and offered him her breast, but he was not interested. When she stood with the child she moved constantly with a gently swaying movement to keep the child happy. He seemed very heavy but she seemed quite comfortable with this arrangement.

Case Three's involvement with Orthodox Judaism began shortly prior to her marriage. She had attended the Jewish Day School but was raised in a non-kosher traditional home. After matriculating she went to Israel where she attended a Yeshiva (religious college) for a couple of months. At the time she

had a boyfriend (whom she subsequently married). She sees her involvement with Judaism as an ongoing, learning experience and she said that she finds that the more she learns, the more involved she becomes. She says that she has had an influence on the lives of her parents, who, although they are not religious, give her a great deal of support for her lifestyle. She feels that her mother was an example to her that a woman can "have it all". Case Three feels that her involvement in Judaism gives her a greater realization of the worth of her role as a mother than she may otherwise have had. She said that the most wonderful thing that had ever happened to her was giving birth to her child. Motherhood had brought out qualities in herself which she never knew she had. She regards her child as an extension of herself and through him she feels that she will grow in worth as a human being. When I questioned her about placing the child in child-care she said that she would never do that unless she was compelled to. While she is able to, she wants to spend as much time as possible with her baby. She said that she would be devastated if she missed out on any noteworthy aspect of his development.

She was very involved in the voluntary work of her community and continued with her profession by working around the baby's routine. She said that she was fortunate to have her mother's assistance, professionally, and with the baby. On questioning her about her husband's role in the family, she said that he is very willing to assist her.<sup>6</sup>

Case Four

Case Four, unlike the other young women I interviewed, had attended a secular day school and came from a Reformed Jewish home. She said that when she was growing up she knew far more about Christianity than she knew about Judaism. She is in her early twenties and has a baby of approximately one year old. She is pregnant with her second child. She said that her involvement with Judaism began after she had completed her schooling and went overseas. As a result of an error in travel plans, while she was visiting Israel, she found herself, quite unintentionally, at a Yeshiva College. She spent a couple of months there and found that what she learnt there opened up a whole new world for her. She has a degree in English Literature and is at present working on a Master's Degree. Up to the time she spent at the Yeshiva she had always been searching for answers to the meaning of life and she had unsatisfactorily explored numerous artistic and philosophical avenues in this regard. She had always felt that religion, (as she understood it, prior to her involvement with Ultra-Orthodox Judaism) and some of the other ideologies which she had come across, were hypocritical. She found that there was an enormous gap between ideals and reality - between what people said they believed in and what they practiced. In Ultra-Orthodox Judaism, however, she said that, because the law affected every minor aspect of daily living, she is able, for the first time, to life her life as an expression of her philosophical beliefs. She said she had always been an

individualist, and something of a loner, and that through Judaism she has found a new meaning in human relationships.

#### Case Five

This interview was with a woman of approximately fifty years of age. I had originally phoned her daughter and when I explained what I wanted to speak to her about, she very enthusiastically said that she thought that her mother would be an ideal person to interview. With great pride, the daughter explained that her mother was highly intelligent, that she was busy with her doctorate and that she would be very worthwhile interviewing. I duly contacted her and interviewed her in her home. She was a social worker by profession who had been born into a family of immigrant parents (from Eastern Europe). Her parents had come to South Africa, as had so many immigrant Jews, fleeing the anti-semitism of Europe. They settled outside a small town where her father ran a trading store. Her mother tried against great odds, to keep a kosher home, and she, as a child, was sent to boarding school for the duration of her school career. After qualifying as a social worker she married a pharmacist and went to live in a small town in the Transvaal. While raising her children she met a Rabbi who had a very strong influence on her thinking and through his influence she began to study Judaism. She attended his lectures once a week and found herself becoming more and more interested in the wealth of knowledge about the religion which she had always adhered

to but never fully understood. As she learnt more and more, over the years, so she became more committed to Judaism as a way of life, replacing the values of the secular world in which she had been raised. She allowed her children the freedom to practise the religion to the degree that they wished. She kept a kosher home but left it to them to decide what they wanted to eat outside the home. The only rule which she applied unbendingly was that pertaining to Friday night - she insisted that the children should stay at home on a Friday and participate in the Sabbath meal. Her husband has only recently become seriously committed to Judaism as a way of life. Previously he had participated in a somewhat half-hearted manner. Her three daughters, all of whom are now married, are religious, although they were not always that way inclined. One is now married to a Rabbi.

Case Five has always been involved in voluntary work in her community but at the same time has always had a job in the market-place. She found difficulty in obtaining work as a social worker in the small town in which she lived after her marriage and as it was necessary for her to work she took a job as a sales representative and she has been doing this job for many years now - working when it has fitted in with the schedule of her family life. She is adamant that her children always take priority over any other activities or interests in her life. She said that no matter what she was doing she always made time to communicate with her children if they needed to talk to her and as a result, her children are not

only her children, they are also her best and dearest friends. Her involvement with Ultra-Orthodox Judaism has been gradual, over a period of many years, and is an intellectual as well as a practical involvement. She spoke very positively about the dignity that she finds as a woman in Judaism and said that the laws of modesty pertaining to Judaism inhibited the treatment of women as sexual objects. She is convinced that the family purity laws have a positive effect for women in marriage.

### Case Six

Case Six was a young woman who had recently qualified as a doctor and was about to enter marriage. She came from a home where she was aware of Judaism as a tradition and philosophy. She experienced feelings of conflict over what she should do with her life after marriage, regarding the prospect of having a child and pursuing her career. To give up her career after six hard years of study, in order to stay at home and care for an infant was something which is difficult to contemplate, within the values of western society. She finds however, as a result of some contemporary Ultra-Orthodox Jewish friends that the conflict is made easier within the value system of Judaism. As a result of this awareness she says that she will more readily temporarily put aside her career to care for a prospective infant without feeling self-sacrificial or apologetic about the role. She has decided to adhere to the laws of family purity as she is convinced that they are a protection against the human tendency to become bored with familiarity in relationships. As a result of her awareness

and understanding of certain halakhic laws, she will be able to enter into an understanding with her husband regarding their finances so that she will not have to ask for money for personal or household needs. Money must be placed in a bank account for her use, and she must always be provided for proportionately to his income so that she should never be made to feel that he is doing her a favour by supporting her financially. She said that she will be able to do this as she feels very strongly about the importance of motherhood. The understanding must be that their marriage is a partnership and that what she brings into it cannot be weighed or measured in material terms. She said that her appreciation of what family life has meant to her has made her want to perpetuate it in spite of its general decline in western society.

The answers to the questions reproduced on the following pages, represent summaries of the important themes which underlay the conversational interview situation.

1. They were asked how they felt about feminism.

The women do not profess to have been exposed to a great deal of information regarding feminist theory. They regard feminism as a movement for the benefit of women in society. In these terms they all see themselves as being in favour of feminism as a goal, but say that there are differences between feminism and Judaism in the means of attaining this goal. They regard themselves as feminists, but regard the main

difference between their notion of feminism and Judaism as being the difference in understanding of the term equality. They accept that they are different from men but they do not see this difference as demeaning. On the contrary they regard themselves as having qualities which they feel men to not have. They feel that their role as mother gives them very specific advantages over men. Their suggestion is that no matter how good and devoted a father a man may be, he will never experience giving birth to a child and breast-feeding it. They consider the experience of motherhood to be a very special blessing. Instances in the Torah were quoted as examples of women's superiority over men in certain ways.

For example, the fact that God spoke to Sarah, in order to influence Abraham, is, according to their interpretation an indication of the recognition of women's influence over men.<sup>7</sup>

This is further evidenced by an extract from the Talmud:

How decisive a woman's effect can be upon the life of her husband is emphatically pointed out in this passage: "It is related of a pious man who was married to a pious woman that, being childless, they divorced one another. He went and married a wicked woman and she made him wicked. She went and married a wicked man and made him righteous. It follows that all depends upon the woman."<sup>8</sup>

They feel very positive and approve of the effect that the feminist movement has had on women's lives in the public sphere by minimizing discriminatory legislation against women and by providing greater economic opportunities for women in a variety of fields. They feel very favourably disposed towards feminism as they understand it to mean a movement to eliminate

discrimination against women. They feel, however, (and this would not be acceptable in terms of most feminist approaches), that the fact that they have different responsibilities and different roles from men does not make them inferior - on the contrary, the general impression that they give is that they feel superior through their differences. They suggest that the bonds that exist between women as a result of the fact that they are separated from men at social and religious functions, are very conducive, in their view, to a feeling of sisterhood. They sit together in synagogue and they dance together at weddings and other such functions and their feelings on this issue of separation from men is that it strengthens the bonds between women. They do not experience the competitive element which often exists between certain women when they are in the presence of men and, this, they feel, brings them closer to other women.

2. Their feelings regarding their status and that of their husbands in marriage was discussed.

On this issue they were all adamant that marriage is a partnership between two people, both different, but neither one superior to the other. They regard marriage as an opportunity to become "complete". They said that the experience of living with another human being, intimately, as people were expected to do in marriage, required a great deal of compromise and that through compromise they felt that they were able to develop a dimension of their own personalities which would otherwise lie dormant.

Some of the women had higher academic qualifications than their husbands. Two examples of this are the medical doctor and the woman who is studying for her doctorate in sociology. They do not feel that this discrepancy is of any consequence to their relationship because, in their view, marriage is a partnership where two different people bring to one another qualities which enhance each other.

3. The issue of financial dependence on a husband during periods of child-bearing and child-rearing was dealt with.

They all feel very secure about the financial arrangements which they have with their husbands. They said that because their husbands are all observant Jews they are aware of their financial obligations towards their wives, and, most importantly, they are aware that they should never allow their wives to be humiliated by asking for money. Case Two quoted the following from the Talmud to illustrate the manner in which marriage is viewed in Judaism:

The ideal of matrimony, which is inculcated by the Talmud, is of the highest. ....'Who loves his wife as himself, honours her more than himself, leads his sons and daughters in the right path, and arranges for their marriage soon after puberty, to him the text refers, "Thou shalt know that thy tent is in peace" (Job v. 24) ... 'Honour your wife, for thereby you enrich yourself. A man should be ever careful about the honour due to his wife, because no blessing is experienced in his house except on her account'. 'A man should spend less than his means on food and drink for himself, up to his means on his clothes, and above his means on honouring his wife and children, because

they are dependent upon him, while he is dependent upon Him Who spoke and the Universe came into being.<sup>9</sup>

4. They were asked whether or not their husbands assist with domestic chores and child-care.

Because one is dealing here with a relatively privileged class of white, professional, South African women, it was generally not necessary for the men, or the women, to wash floors and clean toilets on a daily basis. All the women, however, said that their husbands willingly assist them, particularly with regard to caring for the children when they need help. They all said, however, that the prime responsibility of caring for the children was theirs - the degree of help varied from family to family.

5. Finally, they were asked about their attitude to the family purity laws.

On this issue they were unanimous. They all regarded these laws as advantageous to women. Firstly, they explained that sexual relationships in Judaism are directed towards the needs of the woman and not the man. They backed this claim by explaining that a woman may ask for a divorce if her husband does not satisfy her sexual needs. For instance, the period of abstention is governed by the woman's bodily function, not the man's, and he must regulate his behaviour accordingly.

They do not regard it as demeaning that as a result of biological differences women use the mikvah on a regular basis while men only use it when it pleases them. They regard the mikvah as a very relaxing and enjoyable experience, often accompanied (particularly prior to marriage) by great joy and celebrating with other women, family and friends. They see the experience of the mikvah not only as a personal, intimate experience, but also as a religious experience which unites them in a common feeling with other women.

Concerning the twelve days of separation, physically, from their husbands, during menstruation and thereafter, they reported that they found this separation a very positive experience. They said that it allowed them time with their husbands when they were not viewed as sexual objects, but as companions.

This story from the Midrash <sup>10</sup> illustrates the importance of the idea of hesed as the basic Jewish ethic. The story relates to the Jewish perception of Heaven and Hell. Hell is depicted as a group of people, seated around a table which is laden with food. They all have in their hands large forks with which to feed themselves, but the prongs of the forks are so long that they are unable to reach into the food and place it in their mouths - the forks are longer than an arms length and the people sit around the table, in the presence of the food and starve.

Heaven is depicted as the same place, with people seated around the same table, laden with the same food and provided with the same forks. In heaven, however, the people are happy and well-fed - they are feeding each other with the long forks.

1 Jayaratne, T.E., "The Value of Quantitative Methodology for Feminist Research", in Bowles, G. and Klein, R.D., Theories of Women's Studies (Routledge, London and New York, 1983), Pg. 145.

2 Ibid, Pg. 145.

3 Oakley, A., "Interviewing Women : A Contradiction in Terms", in Roberts, H., Doing Feminist Research, (Routledge and Kegan Paul, U.K. 1981), Pg. 38.

4 Ibid, Pg. 30.

5 A Yeshiva is a religious place of study.

6 As is the case in many white, middle-class homes, a domestic servant does most of the household tasks such as cleaning floors, toilets, etc.) and that he considers it very important that he should be involved in raising the child as he feels it is imperative that he should leave his mark and exert an influence on the child's thoughts and values.

7 Examples that they gave were Sarah, Rachel and Rebecca in the Torah.

8 Cohen, A., Everyman's Talmud, (Schocken Books, N.Y., 1975) Pg. 160.

9 Ibid, Pg. 164.

10 The Midrash constitutes the legends and ethics pertaining to Judaism which were used to illustrate and find new meaning in addition to the literal one in the Scriptures.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### CONCLUSION

It is well-documented that, despite the successes that the women's movement has had in the public sphere regarding women's rights and opportunities, legally and economically, the lot of the women in the private sphere remains an area where abuse and exploitation still persist.

The practicalities of liberation - that's what women have to deal with now. The movement got us to where we are, but now how do we live with it? We've broken through to get these jobs women never had before. How many of us, how long, on whose terms? What do you do about life, children, men, loneliness, companionship, the need to have a real home - things no one thought about when we were so obsessed with liberating ourselves? Women in the next decade have to find solutions for the practical problems, niches for themselves that feel more comfortable. We've gone through the metamorphosis. We're not worms any more, but we're not butterflies yet either.<sup>1</sup>

Freidan contends that for many women life in the private sphere has probably worsened relative to the improvements in conditions in the public sphere.<sup>2</sup>

Motherhood as a relationship, an occupation, an institution, or whatever one may choose to call it, is filled with pleasures, pains, anger and tenderness.<sup>3</sup> It is with motherhood that this dissertation is concerned, and the manner in which a particular group of women, namely Ultra-Orthodox Jewish, professional women come to terms with it in a patriarchal society.

There are differences between the manner in which liberalism and Judaism perceive and define the public/private spheres and it is suggested that these differences affect women's perception of themselves. The reason for this is because these differences of perception and definition affect the value system of society. The suggestion is that the lack of legislation in the private sphere is partially resultant from the political interpretation of these spheres.

The conceptual and ideological system which together forms the Aristotelian-power politics paradigm serves to perpetuate an arbitrary bifurcation between that which is politics and that which is not and to promote an ideology which severs politics from coherent moral consideration and moral issues from that which is explicitly political (public).<sup>4</sup>

Feminist theory, over the years, has provided a variety of reasons and possible solutions for the improvement of women's situations in both the private and the public sphere and enormous strides have been made in western society regarding the attempt to eliminate sexism. Within the ideologies of feminist theories such as socialist, Marxist and radical feminism there are a variety of possible solutions to some of the problems which women continue to experience in modern western society. Some of these theories would postulate revolutionary changes to society as we know it today. As valid and relevant as these theories may be, it is not within the reference of this study to consider anything other than liberal feminist theory which exists within and recognizes the contemporary capitalist system.

Connected with the difference in conceptions of how radically domestic life needs to be changed are other differences concerning how radically nondomestic life needs to be changed. Liberal feminism has tended to accept the basic structures of existing political and economic institutions pressing hardest on the need to make them accessible to women. This contrasts with the leftist perspective present in varying degrees in radical feminism and strongly in Marxist feminism which sees such institutions as hierarchical, competitive, and individualistic.<sup>5</sup>

The hypothesis expressed in this study is that as a result of certain economic and political developments there has been a devaluation of the home and family life in western society.

Industrialization did not mean only a change in the place where productive activities took place; it involved a fundamental change in the nature of familial relations. The family, to a large extent, ceased being a unit of production.....In short, a market economy based on wages and payment for factory-produced goods undermined the necessity of the family as a means of survival.... this has brought about an increased individualization of social life, with individuals replacing families as the basic social unit.<sup>6</sup>

Further to the above, Hoffnung suggests that one of the main reasons that women experience conflict regarding motherhood is because of the change in the value system of western society.

But there is no way to accomplish these changes on a large scale without a change in social values. Our society does not value children. They are viewed as enjoyable objects, necessary to complete a family, but not as valuable or inspiring members of society. There is little recognition on the part of adult society that children contribute something special to the family, the neighborhood, and the community. Children traditionally were valuable as additional productive members of the family; now they are costly. Women traditionally had few options outside of marriage and motherhood, but they were important economic

contributors to the family. Now women have more options, but there is no place for kids in the lives of two independent spouses - unless they share responsibilities. That requires a change in social values.<sup>7</sup>

It has been argued that as a result of this devaluation the role of motherhood is reduced in status and therefore women who care for their own children suffer from lack of self-esteem. This is evidenced by the fact that it has become increasingly difficult for young, professional women to make choices between caring for their infants or pursuing their careers.<sup>8</sup> The conflict is heightened as a result of the greater opportunities which are available for women and the concurrent and resultant devaluation of the role of mother and housewife. Status in western society is directly linked to achievement in the public sphere.

A study by Davies and Welch indicates that the evidence is that:

wb  
// } It is not the mothering of small children or motherhood per se that leads to the feelings of ambivalence on the part of mothers: it is the mothering under a certain set of conditions (in the isolation of the nuclear family) and with a particular set of beliefs about womanhood and motherhood that leads to conflict and loss of self.<sup>9</sup>

In this regard it is suggested that the ethic of individualism (as it is understood in liberalism) is not as conducive to good relations in the private sphere of human relations, such as between mother and child and husband and wife as is the ethic of Judaism, that is hesed. In the recent article in The

Natal Mercury, entitled "Working on Marriage", the following was published concerning attitudes within marriage:

Studies have shown that one of the characteristics happy marriages most commonly share is the ability of husband and wife to recognise each's hidden qualities and nurture them. Experts agree that the Number One goal of a marriage should be improvement and growth - both as individuals and together as a couple. The more one trusts the relationship the more one will feel free to change within it. The idea of mutual education and growth within a marriage represents a turning away from some of the me-first values of recent decades.<sup>10</sup>

It is argued in this study that there are two factors inherent in liberal feminism which may contribute to the fact that women's situation regarding marriage and motherhood remains problematic for some women in modern western society. The two factors are, firstly, the value system of western capitalism and the individualistic ethic of liberalism, and secondly, the fact that there is inadequate legislation in modern western society to protect women from exploitation within the private sphere of marriage.<sup>11</sup>

Concerning the legislation of the private within the parameters of liberal thinking, Jaggar sees the problem for liberal theorists as being the necessity to devise social institutions that will protect each individual's right to a fair share of the available resources while simultaneously allowing him or her the maximum opportunity of autonomy and self-fulfillment.

Liberal answers to this dilemma are framed traditionally in terms of justification and delimitations of the power of the state. For the state is the institution that liberals charge with protecting persons and property and, simultaneously, with guaranteeing the maximum freedom from interference to each individual.<sup>12</sup>

THE STATE  
ON POWER  
PROTECTION  
+ FREEDOM

The feminist movement evolved alongside the political movement of liberalism and then flourished with the Civil Rights Movement in the United States. It has used political ideologies as its main means of emancipating women. Efforts to end discrimination against women have been modelled on legislation against political, economic and race discrimination. This is effective in the public, political sphere but has not been effective in the private sphere where abuse continues largely outside the realm of jurisdiction. The particular areas of concern which need to be redressed for women today are those pertaining to physical and sexual abuse of women generally and economic exploitation by men of women during child-bearing and child-caring years. Oakley suggests that two of the main reasons that these abuses persist, or perhaps worsen, is firstly because of the value system of western society and secondly the lack of legislation in the private sphere. Oakley suggests<sup>13</sup> that the reason for the failure of the feminist movement to achieve certain improvements in the private sphere is rooted in the value system of the public sphere. She says that ".... under capitalism women have been put in charge not only of humanity's lowest needs, but also of its highest necessities. This is not recognised by male-dominated culture (by men or women). Women's work, because it doesn't enhance self-

development, is seen as inferior.) Hence women's chronic low self-esteem: their proness to depression, and the problem of 'underachievement'. It is difficult to reverse these dominant values. Nevertheless it is essential, if we are to see what is unworkable about the prevailing model of sex equality. A female utopia - a world in which women know they are doing good - cannot occur within the prevailing value system."

The difference between the value systems of Judaism and that of liberal feminism, as operative in western capitalism, allows a comparison between the two regarding attitudes to motherhood. It was evident from the interviews that ultra-  
\* Orthodox Jewish women feel valued for their roles as mothers and as a result of this they pursue motherhood with a relatively positive attitude. There is no suggestion in this study that the solution which these women have found is in any way practical as a universal solution to women's problems of motherhood, career, isolation, male dependence and sexual abuse. The intention of this study is to examine some of the attitudes of these mothers and career women who have voluntarily opted for a way of life which seems to be in complete contrast to some of the options which would be available to them in modern western society. From a feminist point of view it would appear that these women have been "conned" into an acceptance of a patriarchal system which ensures that they still have the major burden of housework on their shoulders and carry the main responsibility regarding the caring for children. Nevertheless, as has been argued,

their status as wife and mother has be reinterpreted and is exalted in the level of ideology. The purpose of the study, however, is not to deal with the power of the patriarchal order of western society, and the variety of forms in which it presents itself, nor to suggest universally applicable solutions. This study is a description and comparison of the attitudes of certain Ultra-Orthodox professional Jewish women regarding particular problems in western capitalist society which, it has been suggested, liberal feminism fails to address adequately.

Oakley<sup>14</sup> suggests that men's position in the public world outside the home always puts them 'on top'. The contention is that male dominance ensures that the standards of humanity and social participation to which women aspire are those of men. Since female activities, resources and values are ignored in this ideological transformation, very little will be achieved. A few women will gain access to male positions, but the situation of most will remain unaffected. It is a question of how women see themselves. Are having and rearing children, and a sense of emotional connection with, and responsibility for others, capacities that women must be liberated from in order to become human - that is to become equal to men? She ponders the question of why one talks about the "underachievement" of women in public life outside the home, rather than about the "under-achievement" of men in the home, with children and also in personal relationships.

The concept of equality, and the political and personal

connotations attached to the word in the public and private sphere was another term which was viewed comparatively in this study regarding the different interpretation of the term within liberal feminism and Judaism. It is a contentious concept and was seen as being relevant to the manner in which these Jewish women viewed their role. For them "equality" does not necessarily mean "same".

Elshtain<sup>15</sup> regards equality as one of the most nettlesome concepts in political life and thought. She defines equality as a "cluster concept" around which political life is focused, and suggests that constants over its range of applicability help to constitute the activity of politics.....The historic experience of the liberal democracies demonstrates that equal rights neither entails nor necessarily conduces towards full political equality. In Elshtain's view an equality of opportunity formula pushes Feminist analysis away from an examination of the oppression of classes of persons, male and female. She says that if, however, the focus shifts from a consideration of "rights" or "opportunities" to be a concern with what persons are (or ought to be free to become) an understanding of the obstacles which militate against the emergence of persons thus conceived is facilitated. In her opinion the adoption of equality of opportunity as the rallying cry for a Feminist movement must ultimately be seen as undermining the range of moral claims a version of equality of treatment or respect would affirm or validate.

I return, therefore, to the second of the two meanings of equality as description which is, in turn, tied to equality of respect. An empirical

presumption for equality requires the analyst to seek those social arrangements, relations and institutions which will promote, encourage and preserve equality of respect and treatment.... The problems of thinking about equality along the entire range of its possible appreciation are by no means solved in their (Rowbotham and Mitchell) analyses and crucial questions remain unanswered.<sup>16</sup>

Contingent on the concept of equality and its interpretation regarding role differentiation, it has been suggested by some theorists that there are differences in power structures within relationships which should be taken cognizance of when evaluating women's situation in the family.

As soon as the presence of power in all relationships between men and women is recognized and their articulation with the formal state apparatus examined, a completely new light is shed upon the whole issue. As Oakley has it, while the traditional wife-mother-housewife role 'is correlated with certain types of powerlessness, it also has its own avenues of influence'.<sup>17</sup>

Further evidence regarding the conflict of roles for men and women in the public/private sphere is discussed by Randall<sup>18</sup> who suggests that as the value of women's contribution to both public life and to the family purse is incontrovertibly established, so men will come under increasing pressure to share domestic chores. She says however, as they concede with this approach, in the short run it will serve to lower still further the status of child-care and housework, making them less not more attractive to men (Adams and Winston, 1980). She sees a contradiction between women asserting the value of 'parenthood' and family life and their demanding public policies to reduce their domestic burden. There is no simple

solution to the question of the relationship between women's liberation and motherhood.

The women's movement is moreover far too diverse in its membership and too decentralised to produce any single answer. But as the political backlash and growing female unemployment threaten to drive women back into domesticity whether they will or not, it is an issue feminists will find increasingly difficult to ignore.<sup>19</sup>

That it may be of relevance to feminist thinking to have explored and described some of the issues and situations of specific women, as was done in this study, is expressed by Hooks in the following lines:

Between women, male supremacist values are expressed through suspicious, defensive, competitive behaviour. It is sexism that leads women to feel threatened by one another without cause. While sexism teaches women to be sex objects for men, it is also manifest when women who have repudiated this role feel contemptuous and superior in relation to those women who have not. Sexism leads women to devalue parenting work while inflating the value of jobs and careers. ...

Hooks makes the point that

The fierce negative disagreements that have taken place in feminist circles have led many feminist activists to shun group or individual interaction where there is likely to be disagreement which leads to confrontation. Expression of hostility as an end in itself is a useless activity, but when it is the catalyst pushing us on to greater clarity and understanding, it serves a meaningful function. Women need to have the experience of working through hostility to arrive at understanding and solidarity if only to free ourselves from the sexist socialization that tells us to avoid confrontation because we will be victimized or destroyed ..... Women do not need to eradicate difference to feel solidarity. We do not need to share common oppression to fight equally to end oppression. We do not need anti-male sentiments to bond us together, so great is the wealth of experience, culture, and ideas we

have to share with one another. We can be sisters united by shared interests and beliefs, united in our appreciation for diversity, united in our struggle to end sexist oppression, united in political solidarity.<sup>20</sup>

- 1 Friedan, B., The Second Stage, Pg. 71.
- 2 Ibid, Pg. 71.
- 3 Rich, A., Of Woman Born (Cox and Wyman, Reading, 1991).
- 4 Elshtain, J.B., Politics and Society - 1974 - "Moral woman and Immoral Man: A Consideration of the Public-Private Split and Its Political Ramifications." Pg. 453.
- 5 Nicholson, L.J., Gender and History (Columbia Univ. Press, 1986), Pg. 20.
- 6 Ibid, Pg. 3.
- 7 "Motherhood: Contemporary Conflict for Women", Hoffnung, M., Pg. 135 in Women: A Feminist Perspective ed. by Freeman, J., 1984.
- 8 This problem is explored in the writings of Friedan, Hewlett, Matthews, Oakley, Rowbotham, Ree, Mitchell and Elshtain.
- 9 Davies, B. and Welch, D'arne, "Motherhood and Feminism: Are They Compatible? The Ambivalence of Mothering" ANZJS Vol. 22, No. 3, November 1986, Pg. 411.
- 10 The Natal Mercury, 13 December 1990.
- 11 These issues are addressed in feminist ideologies, such as socialist, Marxist and radical feminism, where, by definition, one would be looking at a value system which differed from capitalist individualism and where the legislation of the private sphere is advocated. These theories, however, are not considered within the confines of this dissertation.
- 12 Jaggar, A.M., Feminist Politics and Human Nature, (Sussex, Harvester, 1983, Pg. 33.
- 13 Oakley, A., New Society - 23 - August 1979.
- 14 Ibid, Pg. 394.
- 15 Elshtain, J.B., "The Feminist Movement and the Question of Equality" Polity, Vol. 7 Pg. 452.
- 16 Ibid, Pg. 452.
- 17 Stacey, M. and Price, M., Women, Power and Politics, 1981, Pg. 4.
- 18 Randall, V., Women and Politics, (London, McMillan, 1982), Pg. 204.
- 19 Ibid, Pg. 204.
- 20 Hooks, B. "Sisterhood: Political Solidarity Between Women" Feminist Review No. 23: 1986

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  - Case Six : Mid-twenties - Doctor - newly married.