The Confluence of the Israelite Girl in 2 Kings 5 and Baridegi in a Korean Myth: Toward Hanpuri Hermeneutics for Korean Women

Hye Kyung Park

Abstract

Minjung theology has been interested in the confluence of two stories in the Bible and the Korean traditions. Mutual relationship in two narratives is a hermeneutical process of reading the Bible in Korean contexts. For Korean women, the hermeneutical confluence appears in the mutual meetings of women in the biblical narratives and Korean narratives. Han is a platform to encounter between the two women: Baridegi and the Israelite Girl (2 Kings 5). They suffer from han in their own contexts. The Israelite girl is captured by Aramean solders and exiled to Aram, while Baridegi is abandoned by her royal parents. Even though these two girls innocently suffer from han, they show their wisdom and courage in their narratives. Furthermore, they are available to become the subjects of women-hermeneutical conversations. To theorize hanpuri hermeneutics, new form criticism functions as a critical method of the interpretation of the two narratives. New form criticism focuses on finding the meanings of each text by analyzing the linguistic elements, which consist of structure, genre, setting, and intention synchronically and diachronically.

Both Baridegi and the Israelite girl function as the healers of their han-givers: Naaman and the King Okui. How can the han-takers become the subjects of the healing process of their han-givers? An answer comes from the hanpuri of the two girls. Baridegi and the Israelite girl, the han-takers, achieve release from their han through reconciliation with their enemies by doing hanpuri. If the Israelite girl still suffered from han in her exiled situation in Aram, she would not be able to help Naaman with her wisdom. When Baridegi encounters her parents, she becomes released from her han and, later, becomes a goddess. Two girls’ hanpuri does not lead them to revenge on their enemies, but it helps them to seek genuine reconciliation with their high-authorities for a holistic life.

In particular, some scholars have interpreted Baridegi as a good daughter who respects her parents and takes care of them. However, her journey to the under sea world is a process of finding her identity. This journey results in her hanpuri and revives her parents. Their hanpuri does not simply ask the forgiveness of their han-givers, but it sincerely reveals the identity of the han-takers. The Israelite girl and Baridegi reach the climax of hanpuri by restoring life to the han-givers.

Hanpuri hermeneutics engages in dialogue with texts and the Korean women who are innocent, but suffer from the patriarchal traditions. This hermeneutics shows the powerful meaning of stories to release Korean women from their han.

Key Words
Baridegi, 2 Kings 5, The Israelite Girl, Han, Hanpuri Hermeneutics, Minjung, New Form Criticism.