

***“How Liberating is the Exodus and for Whom?:
Deconstructing Exodus motifs in Scripture, Literature, and Life***

Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan

Watching Charlton Heston playing Moses in Cecil B. DeMille’s movie epic *The Ten Commandments* along with stories in Sunday School record my earliest recognitions of hearing about Exodus. Early on, many yoked the concept of exodus with the cause of liberation of the enslaved, the disenfranchised, those deemed other. Being educated towards the end of segregation and the beginnings of court-ordered integration in southern United States of America, I saw Martin Luther King, Jr. and others on live television as people marched on Washington and spoke about justice. I went to Sunday School the morning four little girls died because maniacs planted bombs in the 16th Street Baptist Church, Birmingham, also known as Bombingham. I played the theme from the movie *Exodus* as a teenager who had begun studying piano at the age of five. As children, our teachers believed we could do well and we did. Education was our exodus from the stereotypes blasted in the media, and the success our communities believed we could achieve. As an African American girl, daughter of the first African American Deputy Sheriff in the State of Louisiana, I knew about racism, though our parents shielded us from a lot of blatant oppression. Reading slave narratives while studying for the master’s degree in music was a rude awakening about the depths of racial hatred. Through an undergraduate degree in voice and piano and my master’s in music, I continued to assume that Exodus meant inclusive liberation and freedom. During my master’s studies at seminary and my doctoral work, I began to see and hear the concept of exodus in a different light. With almost two decades of teaching in religious and theological education at the undergraduate, seminary, and doctoral levels, my lived experiences in

and outside of the classroom, my twenty-six year interracial marriage to a phenomenal intellectual, loving, compassionate friend, and our large extended multi-ethnic family have made me more adamant about justice and liberation issues. Womanist thought, which seeks to name, expose, and transform oppression in all aspects, provides a powerful rubric that allows me to be Professor/Performer/Priest/Preacher/Poet/Prophet, embracing all my rich experiences, framing my own contexts.

Contexts situate us in the particularity of our reality. The received Exodus text speaks of liberation of the Hebrew children; those God said would be in bondage in conversation with Abraham years earlier. God then tells Moses to tell Pharaoh to “Let my people go.” What about the plight of the Egyptians who were subjects of Pharaoh? What was the justification for the premeditated, sacrificial murder of the Egyptian first born, not limited to pharaoh’s son? Who is the God of the Exodus, and is this God the same God who created the Egyptians? Why did this God never tell Moses or Aaron to preach to the Egyptians, setting them free from their own systems of divinity? Why did this God insist on hardening the heart of Pharaoh, causing tremendous pain and suffering, so that this same God could get the glory of redeemer?

These questions come to mind when I wrestle with Exodus 1-15, particularly given the high regard for Exodus by Jews and African Americans. Sermons, song, and film have chronicled this liberation sensibility. There are several experiences of African Americans that incarnate an Exodus experience, from the great migrations to the North and West during the 1930s-50s to the 1960s Civil rights movement. Many historians and sociologists, however, will argue that the latter did not really change the lives of African diasporan or white poor. While you no longer have to enter from the back door and can

eat at the lunch counters and book a room in a hotel, you still had to have an education and finances to access these various venues. The white flight from inner cities to suburbia shifting tax revenues away from the cities helped to keep poor school systems poor, and made wealthy school systems more so. Such flight by middle class of all racial-ethnic groups helped to re-segregate society and heighten classism. That the U.S. interstate highway system most frequently went through Black and Brown communities caused a rift in many historic communities, so that the village could no longer raise the child, because the village was no more. So who gets liberated when an Exodus occurs?

My essay problematizes the notion of liberation amidst theodicy, visibility, and poverty in Exodus 1-15. Following the mapping out of my interdisciplinary methodology and context, I then: (1) give an overview and examine themes and concepts of liberation in this pericope; (2) place scriptural exodus motifs in dialogue with exodus themes and outcomes in two novels, John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* and Margaret Walker's *Jubilee*; (3) explore the notion of theodicy, poverty, and visibility, in Exodus 1-15 and the novels; and (4) analyze the impact of context on how one hears and engages exodus motifs as living biotexts, as liberation of actual persons.

Mapping a Contextual Terrain

Womanist theory is a tool to name, expose, question, and help transform the oppression of women, particularly those affected by race and class domination face daily. Womanists champion theory and praxis, embracing the struggle for freedom for all people. Freedom is a gift and a right bequeathed by a personal God. Taking the use of language seriously between the divine and the human, and within human community, we engage the politics of language, where words and expressions can inspire or subjugate.

This strategy is vital to analysis of biblical texts. A *Womanist* reading of biblical texts requires an interdisciplinary hermeneutics of (1) tempered cynicism, (2) creativity, (3) courage, (4) commitment, (5) candor, (6) curiosity, and (7) the comedic.¹

(1) Tempered cynicism sometimes equated with reasonable suspicion invites one to question with a sensitivity that knows the joy of the impossible, the hope of embedded faith, together with the scholarship that helps one appreciate the complexities of such work. (2) Creativity affords a context where customary interpretations and traditions do not hinder exploring oral or canonical texts in new ways. (3) Courage provides the cushion for moments when analysis leads to more of the same or to mystery; with the audacity to ask questions and engage comparative analysis of unique and seemingly antithetical texts and themes. (4) Commitment to the hearing and just, appropriate living of these texts undergird the process of relevant discovery. (5) Candor provides the impetus to reveal the oppression within the texts and the communities that have incorporated such tenets to produce an oppressive, though mainline faith. (6) Curiosity presses one to keep searching the realm of the sacred to push the envelope toward an atmosphere of inclusivity, mercy, justice, and love. And, (7) the comedic reminds us not to take ourselves so seriously that we fail to grow and to respect other ways of seeing, though we may disagree.

Womanist biblical scholars wrestle with the scriptures as they deal with the absurdity of oppression: calling for cessation of hostilities, new kinds of interpretation, accountability, and change. *Womanist* theology² is the study or discipline of God-talk that emerges out of the rich yet oppressive experience of women of African descent. Such theology analyzes human individual and social behavior in concert with the Divine.

Womanist theology embodies a God/Spirit who cares and who looks with disgust on anyone who dismisses, disregards, or denigrates a person made in the Divine image. Every person is important and relational. *Womanist* biblical theology merges the study of theology and exegesis to examine and learn from biblical texts towards the empowerment of all people.

Thus, my understanding of the task at hand, the context out of which I read texts is an engaged, creative, involved, sometimes daunting, and thrilling opportunity to get into the worlds of others and the realm of God, presented in the received canon. My life has been one where I have always questioned reality and not been afraid to take an unpopular stance. In various jobs in higher education, challenges to systemic oppression, curriculum, practices, and processes have resulted in the questioning of my hermeneutics, my sense of space, and my rights to engage in justice. Affirmed and appreciated throughout childhood by both parents, extended family, and my church, reality has been about creative expression, having integrity, and being an active participant in community.

As a church pianist at age eleven with my parents' permission, I learned the gift of service and at twelve, began to receive a salary. Music making has afforded travel to many locations, and the capacity to engage people from different spaces and places in life. Many persons have been open and receptive. Others have felt intimidated and envious of my gifts, which gave them carte blanche attempt to thwart my success. Jealousy can be a mean vehicle to counter. My personal exodus has taken me from vocal and piano performance and teaching, to exegesis, theology, homiletics, ethics, history, women's studies, and critical theory. Throughout all publications, a commitment to

justice frames or lurks at the margins of my projects. This is the lens with which I read Exodus 1-15:21.

Windows into Emancipation or Tyranny: Themes and Concepts around Liberation

The book of Exodus reflects a testament of faith, not an eyewitness account of God's self-disclosure and liberative efforts for Israel around 1250 BCE. Binz posits that this salvific God of freedom and life rescues Israel and people today, out of desperation, directing us to new awareness, comprehension, and goals.³

At first glance and within many traditions, the Exodus saga (1-15:21) celebrates emancipation, liberation, and salvation history deliverance of Israel. Framed as patriarchal, genealogical narrative when the new pharaoh had no knowledge of Joseph's legacy, Israel poses a threat that must be controlled and liquidated. Empirical intimidation fails to effect Hebrew genocide, and in the language of Cheryl Townsend Gilkes "if it wasn't for the women," Moses would not have made it. Midwives Shiprah and Puah, mother Jochebed, Pharaoh's daughter, and sister Miriam aid Moses' survival. As an adult, Moses kills an Egyptian and flees to Midian, where he helps Reuel/Jethro's daughters, and subsequently marries Jethro's daughter Zipporah, who also saves his life. Pharaoh dies, Israel suffers, God hears their groaning, and remembers the patriarchal covenant. Amid a divine encounter, God commands Moses to be deliverer, reveals that pharaoh will resist liberating Israel, unless compelled by mighty force, and states that divine power will save the day.

God gets angry when Moses is reluctant, and provides Aaron as Moses' mouthpiece. A strange encounter in Exodus 4 has Zipporah saving Moses' life, apparently from divine homicide, by circumcising their son. In their first meeting,

pharaoh asks who this God is. Why should he pay attention to this God, and further, he will not release Israel, subsequently placing more burdens on the children of Israel. When Moses questions God, about why God allows more evil done to Israel, God replies, “watch what I do to pharaoh.” Divine ego again emerges as a central theme. When Moses reminds the people about God’s promise to deliver them, their pathology of brokenness and enslavement prohibit their listening. Following a genealogical interlude, the next several chapters rehearse the cat and mouse struggles between YHWH and pharaoh with Moses as intermediary, with the message, “The Lord God of the Hebrews, sent me to you saying, “Let my people go.”” The ten plagues serve as contested site of power and control. Amidst this ecological nightmare, YHWH promises to protect Israel and punish Egypt, though a few times God listens to Moses and ceases the onslaught of destruction, after Pharaoh requested respite from the attacks and agrees to let the people go. Often, when pharaoh acquiesces, YHWH hardens pharaoh’s heart again. Following the announcement of the final plague of the death of the first-born, Moses and Israel celebrate Passover. At midnight, YHWH kills all first-born in Egypt and pharaoh tells them to be gone and bless him also. Following the consecration of the first-born of Israel, God leads them out through a wilderness toward the sea of reeds, guiding them with a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. God again hardens Pharaoh’s heart. Pharaoh and his armies pursue Israel, only to be drowned in the Sea, as “Israel saw the great work which the Lord did against the Egyptians and the people feared the Lord; and they believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses” (Ex. 14:31). The saga ends with two songs of praise, of Moses and of Miriam signaling YHWH’s praise of Israel’s deliverance.

One reading of the God of Exodus is that God both wants to liberate the Hebrews and wants to bring an awareness of God to Egypt. The hardening of Pharaoh's heart, by Pharaoh and by God, is juxtaposed over against YHWH's determination to liberate Israel. The plagues God orchestrates occur to liberate Israel: salvific history. Freedom in Exodus involves liberty from oppression and freedom to live on land God promised them. The quest for freedom involves confrontations between a confident, dramatic Moses and a resolute, obstinate Pharaoh.⁴ Randall Bailey cautions a liberationist reading of Exodus 7-11, given the difference between the muted liberationist polemic of P and the liberationist/oppressionist motifs of J and E. P suggests that Pharaoh is actually collateral or a puppet of YHWH; Pharaoh is not the problem. The lapse of Israel's faith is one critical issue. The reshaping of P also signals the superiority of YHWH to all other deities, and teases the Egyptians regarding the Egyptians and their institutions. Thus, P's prime directive is recognizing and honoring YHWH's preeminence. Liberation is a side issue.⁵ Tables turn, with irony and divine action throughout the text, notably regarding women's roles and power, who customarily have no agency, or voice as they are someone else's property.

Women, who are normally powerless in this culture, ultimately, salvage Moses' life, and help to stymie Pharaoh's power. Pharaoh's enslavement of the Hebrews, words of warning to the midwives, and edict to drown Hebrew boy infants prove unsuccessful; the latter two commands thwarted by women. Shiprah and Puah birth Hebrew babies; Pharaoh's daughter rescues Moses from being put in the river, and his own mother, Jochebed, gets to nurse him. Their efforts save his life, while Moses himself murders

another to help his people. He helps three different victims, an Egyptian beating a slave; a Hebrew mistreating a neighbor, and stops nomadic men stopping women getting water.⁶

Brueggeman outlines four themes and notes that we are to read and grasp the book of Exodus as “literary, pastoral, liturgical, and theological response to an acute crisis. Texts that ostensibly concern thirteenth-century matters in fact are heard in a sixth- to fourth-century crisis. . . . [Read as] an exilic document. . . requires a rereading of the main themes of the book.”⁷ Thus, liberation pertains to freedom grounded in faith amidst a Babylonian or Persian pharaoh. Second, law involves a counter-ethic in a government bent on total control. Covenant invites membership options to obliging the empire. Last, presence combines vigor, courage, and God’s nearness in a domain that wants to remove life of such resources. As a liturgical text, Brueggeman posits that the thrust of the book is covenantal liberation with imaginative possibilities, a source of inspiration for other non-oppressive options in the world, where abused, violated, oppressed people become agents of their own stories with the capacity to be accountable for their own future. At the same time, as descendants of Jacob cried out, God heard them, and did not emerge in Exodus until chapter 3, where God hears, remembers, sees, and knows. God chooses Israel as God’s people.⁸

Israel in Oklahoma, Alabama, and Egypt: Exodus Motifs in Dialogue

Contextually, while hundreds of thousands migrated thousands of miles during the Great Depression, less than 16,000 people actually migrated from the area of Oklahoma where Steinbeck located the story. The massive migration actually occurred during the 1940s due to the California economic boom following World War II. Those migrating from Oklahoma primarily came from cities not from farms. Of the actual

immigrants of the Oklahoma Exodus in the 1930s, most prospered while a few, roughly 5% of the population did not. Though Steinbeck made bankers the culprit, the actual problem was New Deal agricultural policies that netted a decline of twenty-four percent of the tenant farmers in the southwest.⁹

John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*¹⁰ chronicles the Joad family's story of oppression and hardship experienced by migrant workers during the Great Depression, juxtaposing poverty, class, and collective action over against individualism and corporate, banking elitism. Banks become the culprit for forcing poor farmers into misery, starvation, and death. The drama unfolds with ecological realities of the Oklahoma Dust Bowl reeking of devastation, ruined crops, and foreclosures. Tom Joad, in his late twenties, returns home from prison, having served four years for manslaughter. Joad meets Jim Casy, his former preacher, who gave up ministry because he believes people themselves are holy. Paralleling Joad's return is the arrival of bank officials, evicting tenant farmers. Tom and Casy reach the deserted Joad homestead. Muley Graves, a local holdout who may be insane, relays the story of the evictions and the location of Tom's family.

Tom Joad goes to his Uncle John and finds the rest of his family: his mother, a strong moral voice of the family, his brother Noah, his pregnant sister Rose of Sharon, her husband, Connie Rivers, a dreamer; and Al, Tom's younger brother. Bereft and without a home, the Joads plan to go to California because of flyers announcing work opportunities in the fields. After setting out with all their possessions and themselves strapped to the truck, with their friend Casy, the Joads find out that these announcements are a fraud. Soon after they begin their trip, the family dog and Grandpa Joad die. The

Wilson family supports the Joads and they decide to travel together to California, creating an extended family system. As the Wilson family's car breaks, and Casy and Tom want to go it alone, Ma Joad refuses for the family to split apart. The family learns from a man returning from California that the work has dried up. They reach California and continue to meet trouble: police harass them; Ma Joad remains stalwart and shields the death of Grandma. Their days in California span from life in a government camp with amenities minus police harassment and Uncle John's alcoholism, to Connie leaving, abandoning pregnant Rose of Sharon, and Casy taking the blame for Tom's brush with police. They move to another camp when they cannot find work and arrive at a ranch where they get higher than normal wages, because they are breaking a strike. Tom learns that Casy is leading the labor organizing, and they must work together against the aristocrats. In an altercation with strikebreakers, one murders Casy; Tom struggles with Casy's killer, kills him, and barely escapes the police. Tom wants to leave to protect his family, but they all leave the ranch so Tom can be safe. They relocate but one of the children tells his secret. Tom decides to leave to fight for the reasons Casy died, and determines to return someday to the family. With heavy rains come flooding. The family cannot leave because Rose of Sharon is about to give birth. Other families escape, but the Joads end up atop their car. Rose of Sharon's baby is born dead, and Uncle John places it in a box and sends it down the creek. Finally, the family gets to higher ground and finds shelter in a barn, where a starving man is dying. Rose of Sharon gives of herself by nursing the dying man back to health.

Steinbeck's classic occurs in the wake of the 1930s Great Depression in the Midwest and West. Also set in the United States, Margaret Walker's saga takes place from the antebellum through Reconstruction eras.

Contextually, Margaret Walker wrestled with her great grandmother's story for decades, passed to her through her grandmother's story telling. Mesmerized by her great grandmother's life, she began thinking about the story as a child, began writing as a nineteen-year-old senior in college, and completed it as her dissertation. Gloria Gayles notes that Walker uses fact and weaves it into fiction, reflecting black historical truth, portraying a tapestry of black family life in the United States. Walker honed this story intended to be a folk novel, for over thirty-one years, as she worked on various degrees, helped raise her family, and was a professor. Her research took her to Georgia and North Carolina where she studied: slave narratives; works on enslaved black folk; Georgia slave codes; and accounts about free blacks during slavery, Civil War, and Reconstruction. She visited Dawson, Georgia to see the anvil, gristmill, and gingerbread house of Randall Ware, her great grandfather: a free person from birth, educated, and wealthy. Her work holds the weight of history and engages a fluidity of poetry, with special attention to form and craft. Walker familiarized herself with history written from the perspectives of white southerners, white northerners, and African American perspectives. Her extensive research included personal papers and state and national archival documents. Her narrative unfolds from the antebellum era, through the Civil War, and reconstruction eras. She reimagined facts of her great grandmother's life, tying in factual historical incidents. For Walker, the white family symbolized the confederate South. Walker focused on class

and race, reflecting socio-political and economic structures that create caste, color, and class, issues as essential as race.¹¹

Jubilee,¹² the novel opens when Sis. Hetta, mother of her master's children dies. John Dutton is the master of the plantation. Hetta's youngest daughter, Vyry, who could pass for white, is the protagonist. Vyry works in the big house as Ms. Lillian's personal servant. Lillian and Vyry are half sisters, with the same father, and they look alike. Brutalized by Big Missy, Dutton's wife, Vyry quickly learns obedience and working skills from a slave, Aunt Sally, who becomes Vyry's surrogate mother. Traumatized by the deaths of many slaves close to her, a public execution, and seeing a slave branded, Vyry becomes the household cook when Aunt Sally is sold. Vyry meets a free black man, Randall Ware, who pledges to buy her freedom if she will marry him. They meet clandestinely and she has three kids by Ware; two of them live. Master John refuses to let Vyry marry Ware and Randall and Vyry continue secretly to see each other until Ware has to leave Georgia. Before his departure, Ware tries to get a white man to purchase Vyry for him, but this fails. Then Ware tries to get Vyry to run away with him, but Grimes, the plantation's overseer, captures and beats Vyry. During the Civil War, Lillian's husband, Dutton, and her brother die in battle; Big Missy dies, leaving Lillian alone. Many enslaved blacks run away. After they learn of the Emancipation Proclamation, the remaining house slave's leave; only Vyry, her children, and Lillian remain.

That night, someone almost attacks Vyry, but a man named Innis Brown rescues her. In the middle of the night, someone attacks Lillian; she loses her mind, and reverts to

her childhood. After Lillian's relatives come to care for her, Vvry marries Brown, they move to Alabama, and start their own farm. At every instance, something or someone obstructs the Brown's dreams. Their house and farm flood. They are cheated by a landlord when sharecropping, and they move again to work for the Jacobson family. Not feeling safe there, they move again after the Ku Klux Klan [KKK] attacks a neighbor. The Klan burns down the house they build in Troy, and Vvry is afraid to rebuild again. After she helps a white woman deliver her baby, Vvry's neighbors come to help her family because they need a *colored granny* to be midwife for the town. Randall Ware returns, and wants Vvry to choose between him and Innis Brown, as she is the wife of both men. She chooses Brown and asks Ware to stay around and be in the children's lives.

Grapes of Wrath, *Jubilee*, and the Exodus story share many themes in common. Each story involves a journey from some place to another and transitions, notably of persons seeking to better the lives of their families and themselves. Sometimes there is an explicit divine presence; other times, persons or rituals signify the role of faith and God. Framed by transition, the Joad family deals with poverty, despair, and insecurity as migrant farmers whose survival and safety were rooted in the family that can no longer sustain itself as a conjugal unit. While some exhibit selfishness, the Joads and other migrants reflect altruism as they embrace other nonbiological family members to their own family. This type of communalism mirrors Steinbeck's uses of socialism and unionism, for the extension of community implies such needs for the disenfranchised.¹³

Tom's character parallels that of Moses, leader of his people, taking them from one land to another. Like Moses, Tom has killed a man, which results in jail time, though

Moses was not. Like Moses, regarding the second murder, Tom commits in retaliation for police killing his friend, Tom knows that his own people will betray him if he stays.¹⁴ At times Ma Joad is also a Moses and an Aaron. She remains faithful, stalwart, and keeps the family together. She is not fearful, and refuses to break when all around her seems to be disintegrating.

In *Jubilee*, Walker constructed her character, Brother Ezekiel to epitomize the slave preacher who preached deliverance, out of a commitment to have enslaved Hebrews mirror the souls of black folk in the United States. As she tells a realistic, humanistic story, she reflects her awareness of some enslaved who desired and prayed that Moses would deliver them from an oppressive Pharaoh of the Southern master. The exodus theme continues during the reconstruction era as Vvry realizes that people often meander a bit in the wilderness before arriving at the Promised Land.¹⁵

Violence and socio-economic injustice shape attempts at finding and maintaining a home in *Jubilee*. Class, gender, and race oppression and discrimination shape the efforts of attaining safe space of protection, belonging, and comfort as home for numerous African Americans. The female protagonist must deal with violence, evils of poverty, sexism, and racism, all of which compromises Vvry's physical and emotional wellbeing and thwart her efforts to make home liberatory for all family members. Fierce disruption occurs for the home when difficulty occurs at creating a home or when violence hinders resistance to outside forces that had been emerging. During slavery, the only safe space for the enslaved was evening when they could close their doors and enter another world of good. After slavery, purchasing land, setting up housing, and finding decent employment was difficult.¹⁶

Freedom to have a home thwarted in *Jubilee* because the Brown's land is susceptible to flooding and they are near people who would prefer slavery be reinstated. When they find a place high on a hill for a home, a place of stability, peace, and sense of ownership, a space of freedom, the ever-lurking presence of the KKK and their own marginal presence shows how fragile their lives can be. When the KKK torches and burns down their new home, in affect what the plagues accomplish against the Egyptians, the destruction depicts the affects of violent disruption born of hostility and prejudice, present during slavery and reconstruction.¹⁷ Along with freedom and acceptance, *Jubilee* includes themes of coming of age, and a quest for righteousness, for justice by the enslaved free blacks and supportive whites. Moses' story is also a coming of age story and a quest for justice. Tom Joad came of age in a jail cell.

Freedom in *Grapes of Wrath* concerns their search for work, which will provide a home. The Joads become delusional because of the deaths along the way, the abuse of power, and how the migrant workers are treated, which unfolds after they were put off of farms their families had worked for generations. Freedom in *Jubilee* concerns how generations of a family deal with legalized disenfranchisement, chattel, being enslaved, objectified bodies; and how they cope amid legalized emancipation. Freedom in Exodus begins when God tells Abram of the impending slavery of his people (Gn. 13), and that God will rescue or deliver them. Their adopted home through the efforts of Joseph become their prison when a pharaoh who did not know Joseph took the helm.

Scholars and believers use Exodus to find hope, strength, and inspiration to resist and overcome. Exodus inspires some to confront and overthrow tyranny, others used it to generate and preserve tyranny; to justify oppression and domination. Themes of

oppression and liberation are both evident, emerging from the nature and use of power in Exodus. Careful considerations of these topics are critical to keep Exodus from becoming a narrative of conquest. Post-biblical use of Exodus reflects complications of using this motif to move toward new community, liberation, and justice. For example, the exodus motif persuaded slave rebellion activity in 1822 Denmark Vesey's rebellion, and simultaneously this motif also pushed some to oppose emancipation. Following the Nat Turner revolt, Roderick Dew penned words against slave liberation, warning against the power of rebellions appealing to exodus motif.¹⁸

Many womanist scholars question using the Exodus motif as normative for validating God's liberative acts for all global, oppressed peoples. Delores Williams notes that the lives of non-Hebrews smell of non-liberation. Neither Hebrew Bible nor the New Testament texts condemn or prohibit slavery; rather many passages sanction slavery, particularly of non-Hebrews. Intriguingly, males possess important owner restrictions regarding their slave status, whereas female slaves remain property. Williams warns us of the necessity of telling the entire Exodus story, which includes reparations from the Egyptians, God's acts of violence against the Egyptians, genocide against the Canaanites and the theft of the Canaanite land. Williams sees a Black appropriation of the texts borne of American slavery, and argues that Black scholars must not deny Black history prior to slavery. The wilderness experience is more inclusive and indicates leadership roles of Black mothers and women, which gets too little attention from feminists and Black liberation theologians.¹⁹

Theodicy, Poverty, Visibility: The Pursuit of Power and Agency

Scripture and contemporary voices reappropriate the exodus story, and find it archetypal of human liberation, as a salvific message of hope. Most modern readers, Christian and Jewish scholars, undergird their religious faith view Exodus 1-15 as liberatory via triumphalist lens mirrored in scriptural reflections on the Exodus. That is, the exodus is a model of divine desire for all oppressed peoples. Does the text itself support this summation? Eslinger posits that Exodus 1-14 does not support triumphalist readings of Exodus 15 and that we often fail to see the differences because we do not recognize the particular narrator's voice in the text. The narrator's voice while strong and most vocal, is silent, implicitly allowing one either to assume the narrator supports the protagonists – YHWH and Moses, or to ignore the narrator all together. The text makes it clear that God's words affirm triumphalist interpretations, as God identifies God's self to Moses and the enslaved Israelites. God teaches Moses his responsibilities, and God speaks, sometimes gloats about taking down Egypt. Moses makes up the A-men corner. Eslinger reminds us of irony surrounding the exodus: that God foretells Abram about the coming bondage of Israel in Egypt (Gen. 15:13); that God's covenant with Abram, including progeny results in huge numbers of persons that trigger their enslavement; that God lets them suffer in captivity over an extended period of time. God seems to need a second groaning of Israel to bring them some relief; and the narrator reminds us incessantly that God hardens Pharaoh's heart. Such narrative laced with irony paints a manipulative, egomaniacal picture of God. Not only does God not want to let Israel go too soon, justifying the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, God insists on getting all glory, manipulating Pharaoh's stubbornness and making the latter a scapegoat. God confesses as

much eight times in Exodus: (toward Israel, 6:7, 10:2; regarding Pharaoh, 7:17; 8:18; 9:14; toward Egyptians 7:5, 14:4, 18; and towards Moses 8:6; 9:29.)²⁰ Framed by years of interpretation and rereading of other biblical texts, particularly Genesis, the God of Exodus engages in teleological ethics: ends justify these particular means. What does such an interpretation say about theodicy?

Theodicy (*theos* = God, *dike* = justice), asks in Rabbi Kushner's words, "why do bad things happen to good people? The classic Augustinian free will and the Irenaean soul making arguments honed by Hicks is philosophically interesting, but provides little assurance when trying to make sense out of the madness and mayhem of evil. Arguments that are more recent are often as problematic. In the Exodus text, initially the Egyptians led by Pharaoh are persecuting the children of Israel. These children groan for a long time and finally God hears them, and send them deliverance in the guise of Moses. This same "I am, who I am becoming God" then uses oppression at a more intense level to get rid of the Egyptians. When answering Kushner's question, the text would answer "bad things happen to the children of Israel, because the King who knew Joseph is dead, the Hebrew numbers are too large, and threatening, so the new King has to control them, through enslavement." At the end of the pericope, the Egyptians first born are slaughtered and the remaining soldiers drown by divine edict, divine action. Why does God kill the Egyptians who have nothing to do with Pharaoh's will? One approach is to examine the wrath of God.

In the Hebrew Bible, God's wrath and anger is intense. Wrath, not one of God's perfections, is "a function of God's holiness against sin."²¹ God hates the sin and the sinner. God's love blossoms and grows amidst God's perfections; ergo, that God's wrath

and love be directed against a community or an individual at the same time is not inherently impossible.²² When viewing the wrath of God in concert with God's love, it seems negative and antithetical to a perfect being. Erlandson suggests that scripture never finds divine wrath illicit and unjust, even when YHWH's actions seem irrational (Ex 4:24ff). The text implies YHWH's wrath is rational, in conjunction with divine holiness and righteousness, warranted because people somehow violated God's laws and holiness. YHWH's wrath in the Hebrew Bible pertains to covenant, and when people break covenant God's wrath becomes ignited. Yet, pedagogically, God exercises mercy and offers patience towards human conversion. If people do not heed the warnings, however, judgment will occur. Erlandson argues that we find divine wrath of a perfect God, problematic when we juxtapose it over against human wrath -- an inappropriate move. He finds that divine wrath, framed by divine love is appropriate in the context of human sin: a normative response of divine morality and sanctity. For Erlandson, minus divine wrath, YHWH cannot be totally righteous, thus diminished into sentimentality.²³ The Midrash also weighs into this critique.

With a commitment toward amplifying scripture, morale building, and teaching moralistic behavior, the Midrash examined Hebrew enslavement from a circumscribed perspective. In their analysis, they concluded Egyptian persecution was genocidal, for they wanted to remove all Hebrew people. For the sages, Egyptians used clandestine and trickster ways to discover Hebrew babies being hidden by parents, to take them away and drown them immediately. To halt Hebrew procreation, Egyptians kept men apart from their wives, forced women to do brutal work, and coerced men to do women's work, psychologically breaking them all down. Further, the aggadists justify God hardening

Pharaoh's heart because Pharaoh did not heed the previous five warnings, so God decided to punish him;²⁴ corporal punishment run amuck.

Fretheim argues that violence and wrath are not divine attributes, rather a response to human sin, sins of violence. Thus, God uses violence for two reasons: salvation and judgment. God deals with the penalties of existing sin: sometimes God is active; other times passive. God's violence, other than the sacrifice of Isaac, seems connected to human transgressions. God uses violence as a means to deliver people from violence, as in Exodus – from the consequences of their own sin and from those of others. Biblical, divine violence is problematic at best, ambiguous at the least. Fretheim posits that while we do not excuse the divine violence of murder, abuse, genocide, God out of God's loving purposes, decides to engage in violence so that evil will not triumph: a matter of hope.²⁵

Is there a personality clash going on between YHWH and Pharaoh, the latter, who in his cosmology is god? John Durham contends that Moses first approaches Pharaoh with authoritative, almost arrogant confidence, with dramatic deliberation, which probably amused or seemed incongruous to Pharaoh, who has no awareness of any such God; is not interested in this God, and probably saw this as a waste of time. With Moses and Aaron disheartened, Moses apologetically tries to renegotiate, when Pharaoh accuses them of being a distraction to the people. When the plagues unfold and when YHWH hardens Pharaoh's heart, Durham suggests that YHWH has indisputable responsibility, that the backdrop is a sequence of mighty-acts. During the third mighty-act, Egyptians recognize that these acts are acts of a god, shaking their fortitude and sense of power. With the slaughter of the first-born, there is much unprecedented, unrepeatable anguish.

Pharaoh, who had enslaved the Hebrews, who did not know YHWH, this God of the patriarchs, tried to match this God's deeds. With defeat in the air, pharaoh asks Moses and Aaron for YHWH's blessing. Pharaoh at YHWH's interjection, however, again pursues the people of Israel after having given them permission to leave. The final hymn celebrates YHWH as deliverer.²⁶

Robert Allen Warrior reminds us that the received text of the Exodus story provides an incongruous model of liberation for any people from any context, because not only does YHWH the deliverer become YHWH the conqueror. YHWH, honoring the Abrahamic covenant, orders merciless extermination, decimation, and scapegoating of the indigenous people. For those who take this part of the canon seriously, such cruelty, prejudice, and violation of innocent peoples needs to be examined critically -- from its impact on U.S. ideology and awareness to its style of alleged leadership and social change.²⁷

Brueggemann contends that with the plagues there comes "an inversion of Israel and Egypt, in terms of who cries now and those who cried earlier, . . . like an eschatological proviso on any set pattern of power relations."²⁸ YHWH's atrocious passion for murdering the firstborn signals divine willingness to use any means necessary to protect vulnerable Israel. The narrator gives little time or concern for the decline of Egypt. The text focuses on Israel's new reality, from powerless to being powerful, as Egypt goes from being empire to emptiness. In Exodus 15, the narrator describes YHWH in human terms, graphically in ways that move us toward biblical faith, which makes us deal with faith as concrete. Problematically, military descriptors or metaphors describe God. For those who sense God is on their side, the violence is a non-issue. This is not an

issue to write off quickly or dismiss. When Brueggemann moves to talk about conflict and struggle for power and authority in the Bible as a way to move toward not seeing biblical faith as a “benign, innocent affair,” while claiming the battle for faith is part of making the claim that “God is for us,” the argument seems to rest in ambiguity, wherein he initially did state the tensions and problems within the text dealing with divine violence. That the cosmic, watery imagery connotes there is order over chaos and that God’s sacred power has a public dimension and is victorious over enemies of human well-being while poetic and liberatory for Israel,²⁹ is not helpful for the dead Egyptians, whose heart God did not harden, and whose minds were not given choices.

When reading the Exodus account regarding the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart, Carol Meyers reminds us that this is not a historiographic record, but a narrative arrangement: thus, the dynamics of hardening of his heart vary through the text and pertain to the signs and wonders of the plagues, where Pharaoh’s “hardened” heart means he has great resolve that he will not release the enslaved. Pharaoh’s intentions and acts ultimately emerge as divinely produced activity. She posits that the ultimate goal is not the liberation of Israel from Egypt, but that Pharaoh recognizes Israel’s god’s divine sovereignty.³⁰ The text and Meyers’ argument imply that the God of Israel can liberate Israel by any means necessary, even if it means unleashing infanticide on the innocent, that is, including those Egyptians are not in power. Meyers names a critical issue of divine sovereignty, at any costs: a theodicy by divine choice, which begs the question: if God is good and suffering occurs because of God, then is the resulting destruction, pain, and suffering of the Egyptians obliterated because of the divinely initiated teleological results for the good of the chosen? Many scholars have rationalized divine use of evil for

the good of Israel as redemptive suffering, as a tool of divine deliverance, exacted on the backs and bodies of the Egyptians for the liberation of the chosen of Israel.

Problematically, the same God who created the children of Israel created the children of Egypt. While Pharaoh exacted evil against Israel, even when he worked to halt his oppression, YHWH re-hardened his heart. How can this be redemptive, when Pharaoh becomes YHWH's robot? Deliverance of one who has consented to be obedient over against another group who is never taught, evangelized, or recruited to be obedient seems to create a skewed theodicy and does not honor justice. How much of the results lie within the purview of God, and how much in the hands of the redactors?

The theodicy in *Grapes of Wrath* and in *Jubilee*, are a mixed bag of so-called natural evil and evil resulting from human choice. The drought and Dust Bowl of 1930 falls under natural disasters called acts of God. With the drought, failure of crops, and thus foreclosures of farmland, migrants of many ilks moved to California. On their journey, they meet persons that do evil, that cause harm. The Joad family also meets people of good will, who are willing to give a family a hand. Vvry and her family deal with a theodicy created by those who think it just to enslave and oppress others. They understand that God loves them, and that many people interested in enslavement as a business, do so my habit and choice.

Poverty and related suffering is blatantly present in both novels. The socio-economic poverty is intense, is class-based in *Grapes of Wrath*, and involves class and race in *Jubilee*. While some scholars define poverty as to lack basic indispensable items – including food, clothing, safe, potable water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information and shelter – needed for appropriate living, others contend that

poverty relates to income (the amount of money a person makes) and consumption (monetary value of the goods that an individual actually consumes).³¹

In the novels and Exodus, people suffer from the ills of poverty, shaped by institutionalized, systemic oppression. The enslaved of Exodus and *Jubilee* have little or no agency regarding their plight; the poor of *Grapes of Wrath* are trapped in a system, with limited education, at the effect of the weather, of a drought. For the most part, impoverishment does not hinder their practice of faith or belief in a deity. There are moments when poverty exacerbates life's challenges, so persons either hold to their faith much stronger, as Ma Joad and Vyry, or they buckle under to the pressure and cannot hear words of proclamation because they think all people are holy, like Casy, or their pain speaks too loudly, as in Exodus. The ancient, Near Eastern world of Israel employed three types of commodified labor: forced labor could be state-organized (Israel in Egypt); work companies comprised of foreigners, destitute immigrants, or local residents; or household-based servanthood, usually involving voluntary indentured slavery resulting from being spoils of war, paying off a debt.³² Poverty, classism, and elitism, by virtue of the fact that these categories limit or empower access, help shape one's visibility.

Visibility pertains to one's ability to be seen, to have agency, to have the capacity to be noticed by, or catch the attention of other people. While YHWH and Moses are the protagonist and major actors in Exodus, the text accords heightened visibility to women who not only save Moses at his birth and early infancy, but as an adult, his wife rescues him from a God who attacks him, but ultimately does not kill him. Zipporah's heroic response is quick, and ritualistic in nature.³³ The midwives visibility increases, crosses layers of gender and class, for when Pharaoh ordered Shiprah and Puah, two midwives, to engage in selective infanticide by allowing girl babies to live and by killing all male infants, their resistance and obedience to God,

finds their names recorded for posterity, and the planned genocide by Pharaoh silenced. As marginalized persons, these women exert much power, if for only a few moments/chapters.

As women helping other women, and offering supportive holistic care through the intimate practices of midwifery, midwives used prayers, religious rituals, and their technical skills, as wise women helping bring new life into the world. While midwives were present at most deliveries, wet-nurses, were unusual. How striking that Jochebed gave birth to Moses and ended up being his wet-nurse at the behest of the unnamed Pharaoh's daughter, after Jochebed had placed Moses in a basket on the river to protect him from death at the hands of Pharaoh himself. Ironically, the river Pharaoh prescribed for killing Israelite male infants provides safety for Moses. That the midwives disturb national political intrigue and planned genocide produces visibility, subversion, and comedy at its best.³⁴

In *Grapes of Wrath*, Tom Joad is the protagonist, Steinbeck fashions Ma Joad and Rose of Sharon in ways that sharpen their visibility in the narrative. Ma Joad's quiet strength and moral fiber helps keep the family together repeatedly. Rose of Sharon comes of age, learns to be independent, and gives of herself to aid a dying man at the end of the novel. Mirroring a reversal, Uncle John places Rose of Sharon's dead baby in a box on the river: the river saves Moses; the river receives the Joad's dead. In *Jubilee*, Vyry, the protagonist has tremendous visibility, as it is her story. Randall Ware and Innis Brown, as those who seek to love and protect Vyry are visible at significant turning points in Vyry's life, particularly regarding experiencing freedom, safety, and having a home. Visibility is not only central in character analysis but it also affects geographic context.

The land promised to Israel, occupied by foreign peoples, is occupied land, and divine edict and intention will destroy those foreign peoples. God makes land an issue in the covenant agreement with Abram, Genesis 12:1-3, where God will give Abram a son, make his name great, thus have a relationship with Abram's people in perpetuity, and will

give him and his descendants land. God adamantly asserts that as part of divine covenantal assurance, freedom and the Promised Land is a certainty. God, as subject and arbiter, will free, deliver, redeem, take, will be, will bring, and will give land and liberation to Israel.³⁵ The Joazebs have to leave the land they had farmed, but never really belonged to them. Vyry and her family search for land and home, and finally do settle when the surrounding white town members realize that Vyry has something they need, so they *allow* Vyry and her family to live in their community.

Contextual Lens: A Hermeneutical Gaze on Using Exodus motifs as Living Biotexts

In his discussion on Exodus, liberation theology, and theological argument, Loader broaches the question of whether text or context weighs in as locus of authority. In reviewing the work of liberationists from Gutierrez to Croatto, Boesak, and Bishop Tutu, he finds scholars claiming the relevance of Exodus to liberation and sanctioning this claim because of biblical authority. Embracing Itumeleng Mosala's notion that such a theoretical move is problematic and a theoretical tragedy, Loader argues that we need to get away from the impasse of starting from an existential context and from biblical text as word of God. Outlining the problems of biblical redundancy, self-contradictions, and selective biblical use, Loader suggests that the way out is to set up biblical authority as functional, following the work of James Barr. While Loader shows that one cannot use scripture both as the foundation of the argument *and* as part of the evidence of the argument, his move to the language of yoking the Hebrew exodus and the New Testament cross as symbols does not solve the problem of just who gets liberated, particularly the plights of the Egyptians – despite his creative use of allegory, metaphor,

and analogy to offer liberation theology a way out, with the caveat that one must be mindful of the purpose of argument.³⁶

Eddie Glaude, Jr., posits that African Americans use the term Exodus as religious, political, and socio-religious metaphor to make sense of middle passage, enslavement, and struggles for emancipation in the 19th century through liturgical drama of praying, preaching, and singing, disintegrating the space between enslaved peoples in ancient Egypt and colonial United States. Exodus embodies a vision quest of freedom, a movement, or progression from bondage, as the journey transforms the community, framed by enslavement, freedom, law, and revolution. Using Exodus language of Egypt, covenant, wilderness, and Promised Land was the political language of African American public life to unveil the suffering, violence, death, and hope that signified much African American reality. Used politically, Exodus language affords a critique that presses society to live up to its founding principles and ideals, embracing a God of justice and order, whose deliverance promises and grace meant the nation should also do justice in law and deed. Puritans also embraced the Exodus motif, imaged as their migration from the Old country to a New Canaan. Glaude notes that some do not embrace the Exodus motif: for Michael Walzer, Exodus invokes political messianism, which craves apocalypticism, seeks to force the eschaton, and views victory unconditionally. Henry Highland Garnet challenges Glaude's and Walzer's notion of Exodus politics and argues Exodus induces enslaved and free Blacks towards passive gradualism.³⁷ When a community requires a savior, a Moses to get them justice, too often the charisma of the savior figure allows that person the room to misuse her/his power, and can move the oppressed to a sense of entitlement, or a sense where like Garnet, they do not need to

participate in their own liberation. Either scenario is ultimately pathological and rarely affords permanent change.

Jannie Malan warns of dangers when positing that God is on a particular side, or identifying as God's chosen people in conjunction with the Exodus motif. She supported the idea of a needed complement, because Exodus failed to invoke an all-embracing or durable liberty. Socio-economically and religiously, the majority of Israel followed their own desires despite their oppression of others. By supporting an Exodus from Jerusalem, as a complement to the Exodus out of Egypt, Malan aspires to expose and transform Israel's nationalistic exclusivism, socio-economic aloofness, and its religious formalism and apocalypticism as she yokes both testaments, aware that establishing fulfillment in Christ could lead to other hermeneutical shifts. She concludes that the answer to this quagmire of systemic oppression is an exodus from Ego, a way to augment the challenging power of the Exodus motif.³⁸

Noting who we are affects what we read, Dykstra gives a reading of Exodus privileged by corporate capitalism, while committed to liberative justice today. This quest for justice invites challenges to embracing Exodus. Dykstra finds several scholars who reject the Exodus-liberation motif as available universally. Franciscan sister, Margaret Guider rejects Exodus as paradigmatic based on her study of liberation theology, the story of Rahab, a prostitute in the book of Joshua, and her own work with marginalized women, because Exodus avoids the reality of exploited women and champions conquest. Dykstra's second critique involves the work of womanist theologian Delores Williams (mentioned earlier) who posits a survival/quality of life tradition that understands God does not liberate all oppressed, noting the irony and contrast: Hagar, an Egyptian in

Genesis is enslaved like Israel; yet, God liberates Israel but sends Hagar back to enslavement. And last, Robert Allen Warrior, an Osage Nation member, (also cited earlier) identifies with the Canaanites in Exodus, for the Canaanites and indigenous peoples already occupied the land later stolen from them. The “chosen” oppressors murdered their people and almost destroyed their religion and culture, creating a twofold problem: the historical problem is that the conquest wiped out the history; the narrative problem is that God orders Israel to obliterate ruthlessly those indigenous persons of the promised land. In digesting these challenges, Dykstra reminds us that we all have multiple identities in a pluralistic global reality, thus one can be privileged in one aspect, and oppressed in another. Multiple readings do not have to be negated, and we do not need to fall prey to what she terms postmodern paralysis, where since there is no one normative, reading of the text, and one is then accused of creating some illegitimate new universalism or false authority, we fail to challenge familiar, old, heterosexist patriarchal readings of texts. Cautioning against a misreading of Exodus, she posits that many of us are both Egypt and Israel, and we are responsible for the oppressed being liberated and going free.³⁹

In sum, Exodus is not liberatory for everyone within the text, or for those who may read it. Tempered cynicism required suspicion about the divine scapegoating of pharaoh and the marginalization and manipulation of the Egyptians in response to the hope and deliverance of Israel, showing the complexities of deconstructing the liberation process, where some view YHWH’s actions warranted and others view them problematic. Creativity allowed a context where normative interpretations of the Exodus tradition, in concert with readings of *Jubilee* and *Grapes of Wrath*, affording different

insights into notions of liberation, land, and the variety of experiences one can have in an exodus, as one goes from one place/situation/reality to another. Courage provided flexibility when the analysis of liberation themes and disturbing factors like the hardening of pharaoh's heart leads to the same results for some, insight on the divine ego for others, and then mystery as to where the redactor ends, and Israel's historical experience began. Some may perceive having the audacity to question the liberator/deliver God as heretical, yet analysis of unique and perhaps antithetical texts produced similar themes. Commitment to the hearing and just, appropriate living of these texts allowed a discovery of new terminology, and a different sensibility by pharaoh. There are times when he acknowledges YHWH's power, though he is not directly evangelized. Candor pressed the revelation of the oppression of Egyptians and the absence of references to women beyond the first two chapters within the texts. Further, communities have incorporated Exodus for hope and for tyranny, often producing a simplistic reception of the texts amid mainline faith that fails to examine the entire story. Curiosity pressed my renewed searching of the realm of the sacred to push toward inclusivity, mercy, justice, and love. This process left me with still more unanswerable questions in response to a complicated, ancient reality. For now, more questions are a good. The comedic lens reminded me to enjoy the discovery without taking the texts or myself too seriously, accepting there are other ways of seeing these texts: ways that feel compromising; ways that have sustained the faith and the scholarship of many for millennia. Another reading, from a different context, asking different questions may one day satisfy the troubling way the reduction of these texts have produced incomplete witness, and thus made us complicit in harm done to oppressed peoples somewhere, in the name of God.

ENDNOTES

¹ This hermeneutic was first used in my article, "Hot Buttered Soulful Tunes and Cold Icy Passionate Truths: The Hermeneutics of Biblical Interpolation in R&B (Rhythm and Blues)" in *African Americans and the Bible: Sacred Texts and Social Textures*, Vincent Wimbush, ed. (New York: Continuum, 2000).

² Diane Hayes, "And When We Speak: To Be Black, Catholic, and Womanist," in Diana L Hayes, and Cyprian Davis, *Taking Down Our Harps* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Press, 1998), 102-119.

³ Stephen J. Binz, *The God of Freedom and Life: A Commentary on the Book of Exodus* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1993), 3-8.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 21, 28, 31, 34, 36.

⁵ Randall C. Bailey, "And They shall know that I am YHWH!': The P Recasting of the Plague Narratives in Exodus 7-11," *Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center* 22 (1994): 12-17.

⁶ Binz, 14-18.

⁷ Walter Brueggeman, "The Book of Exodus" in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, Vol 1 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994), 680.

⁸ Binz, 18, 21.

⁹ Keith Windschuttle, "Steinbeck's Myth of the Okies" *The New Criterion* Vol 20 (June 2002): 24, 26, 29.

¹⁰ John Steinbeck, *Grapes of Wrath* (New York: Viking Press, 1939).

¹¹ Margaret Walker, *How I Wrote Jubilee* (Chicago, IL: Third World Press, 1972), 3-25.

¹² Margaret Walker, *Jubilee* (New York: Bantam Books, 1966).

¹³ Rebecca Hinton, "Steinbeck's The Grapes of Wrath" *Explicator* (Winter 98) Vol 56 Issue 2), 101.

¹⁴ George de Schweinitz, "The Bible and the Grapes of Wrath," in *A Casebook on The Grapes of Wrath*, ed. Agnes McNeill Donohue (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co, DATE), 11-113.

¹⁵ Walker, *How I Wrote Jubilee*, 25.

¹⁶ Amanda J. Davis, "Shatterings: Violent Disruptions of Homeplace in Jubilee and the Street," *MELUS*, Vol 30, Number 4 (Winter 2005): 25-39.

¹⁷ Davis, 31-32.

¹⁸ Scott M. Langston, *Exodus Through the Centuries* (XX: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 4-8, 144.

¹⁹ Delores S. Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 147-152, 160-161.

²⁰ Lyle Eslinger, "Freedom or Knowledge?: Perspective and Purpose in the Exodus Narrative (Exodus 1-15) *JSOT* 52 (1991): 43-50.

²¹ D.A. Carson, "God's Love and God's Wrath," *Bibliotheca Sacra* (October – December 1999): 388.

²² *Ibid.*, 388-389.

²³ S. Erlandson, "The Wrath of YHWH" *Tyndale Bulletin* 23 (1972): 111-112.

²⁴ Melvin Jay Glatt, "Midrash: The Defender of God" *Judaism* 35 (winter 1986), 87, 95-97.

²⁵ Terence E. Fretheim, "God and Violence in the Old Testament," *Word & World* No. 24 (Winter 2004): 22-28.

²⁶ John I. Durham, *Word Biblical Commentary*. Vol 3 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 64, 69, 97, 109, 191-193.

²⁷ Robert Allen Warrior, "A Native American Perspective: Canaanites, Cowboys, and Indians" in *Voices From the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World*, ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), 287-295.

²⁸ Brueggeman, 772.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 772, 773, 781-82, 803.

³⁰ Carol Meyers, *Exodus* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 70-71.

³¹ "A Dollar a Day: Finding solutions to Poverty," What is Poverty? http://library.thinkquest.org/05aug/00282/over_what_is.htm; Viewed October 12, 2009.

³² Meyers, 35-36.

³³ Carol Meyers, *Exodus* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 63-64.

³⁴ Meyers, 36, 40-43.

³⁵ Meyers, 54, 68-69.

³⁶ J. Loader, "Exodus, Liberation Theology and Theological Argument," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 59 (July 1987): 3-18.

³⁷ Eddie S. Glaude, Jr., *Exodus! and religion, Race, and Nation in Early Nineteenth-Century Black America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 3-5, 46, 111.

³⁸ Jannie Malan, "A Complement to the Exodus Motif in Theology?" *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 61 (December 1987): 5-13.

³⁹ Laurel A. Dykstra, *Set them Free: the Other Side of Exodus* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2002), xi-xvi, 38-65.