*Chapter One*

# Reparations in Exodus[1]

*Matthew Schlimm*

Christian interpreters of the Bible usually see themselves as God's chosen people. We relate to people like Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, and Jacob and Rachel. When reading a book like Exodus, we naturally think of ourselves as the Israelites rather than the Egyptians. Since childhood, most of us have been taught to read the Bible this way. It allows us to feel like we're on the right side of history. We prefer not to identify with the bad guys.[2]

In an essay called "Why I Stopped Talking about Racial Reconciliation and Started Talking about White Supremacy," Korean American writer Erna Kim Hackett characterizes such interpretive practices as "Disney princess theology." In a quote from the essay that went viral in 2020, she points out why it's so problematic that White Christians see themselves as the princess in every story:

> For the citizens of the most powerful country in the world, who enslaved both Native and Black people, to see itself as Israel and not Egypt when studying Scripture is a perfect example of Disney princess theology. And it means that as people in power, they have no lens for locating themselves rightly in Scripture or society—and it has made them blind and utterly ill-equipped to engage issues of power and injustice.[3]

In actuality, White Americans more closely resemble the Egyptians than the Israelites. Unlike the Egyptians, however, White people have failed to pay reparations for the legacy of slavery.

If you've never heard that the Egyptians paid reparations to the Hebrews for the time that they spent in slavery, it's not entirely your fault. "The Israelites," says Exodus, " . . . had asked the Egyptians for jewelry of silver and gold and for clothing, and the Lord had given the people favor in the sight

of the Egyptians, so that they let them have what they asked. And so, they plundered the Egyptians" (12:35–36; NRSVue). The first sentence sounds like the Egyptians are engaging in a practice remarkably similar to reparations. Coins had not yet been invented, so in lieu of currency, the Egyptians gave the greatest valuables they owned.[4] But what about the plundering? One definition of plunder is "to take something wrongfully." Why would God encourage seizing someone else's property wrongfully? Are the Israelites doing something good, receiving what is owed to them for centuries of working without pay? Or are they stealing?[5]

Some interpreters like George Coats have suspected that when the Israelites asked for such precious items, they only asked to borrow them. By leaving Egypt for good with these treasures, the Israelites thus plundered the Egyptians.[6] There are at least four problems with this way of treating the text, however. First, this approach presupposes that the Egyptians were foolish enough to lend out jewelry in mass quantities without worry about their return.[7] Second, this line of interpretation comes out of a sad habit among biblical interpreters of seeing the Israelites—and Semites in general—as morally suspect. Several interpreters have spotted and rejected such anti-Semitism.[8] Third, Exod 3:21 and 11:3's talk of YHWH giving favor to the Israelites in the eyes of the Egyptians suggests that the Egyptians gave gifts freely, not that they were deceived.[9] Finally, the biblical text never says unambiguously that the Israelites only asked to borrow the valuables.[10]

The Hebrew word translated "plundered" in Exodus 12:35–36 (and 3:22) appears more than 200 times in the Bible.[11] In a handful of cases, it appears in violent contexts (see 2 Chron. 20:25). Exodus 12:35–36, by contrast, talks about the Israelites asking Egyptians for valuables and the Egyptians giving tremendous gifts. That doesn't sound like theft or warfare. It sounds more like a wedding reception or a baby shower. The Egyptians give great gifts to make sure that the Israelites have a good start in their new lives.[12] It sounds even more like the Egyptians realized their treatment of the Israelites was fundamentally wrong, and they tried to make reparations.

From early to modern times, interpreters have seen the giving of gold, silver, and garments as something akin to reparations. Already in the second century BCE, Jubilees 48:18 talks of the transfer of valuables "in return for the fact that [the Israelites] were made to work when [the Egyptians] enslaved them by force."[13] Around the same time, Ezekiel the Tragedian's *Exagoge* makes similar remarks.[14] In (probably) the first century CE, the Wisdom of Solomon appears to allude to the Israelites' gaining Egyptian goods when it says that Wisdom "gave to holy people the reward of their labors (10:17, NRSVue). Near the same time, Philo talks of the Israelites taking from the Egyptians "a bare wage for all their time of service" and "payment long kept back through reluctance to pay what was due."[15] In the early third century

CE, Tertullian speaks of this transfer of goods as "compensation for [the Israelites'] hire, which they were unable in any other way to exact from their masters."[16] The Babylonian Talmud similarly brings the discussion of the Egyptians' gold and silver into conversation with the wages due to the Israelites (*b. Sanh. 91a*).[17]

This interpretive strand continued in more recent times. In the mid-nineteenth century, African American Martin R. Delany interprets Ex 12:35–36 as a basis for taking something akin to reparations:

> Keep this studiously in mind and impress it as an important part of the scheme of organization, that [enslaved persons] must have money, if they want to get free. Money will obtain them every thing necessary by which to obtain their liberty. The money is within all their reach if they only knew it was right to take it. God told the Egyptian slaves to 'borrow from their neighbors'—meaning their oppressors—'all their jewels'; meaning to take their money and wealth wherever they could lay hands upon it, and depart from Egypt. So you must teach them to take all the money they can get from their masters, to enable them to make the strike without a failure.[18]

More recently, Victor Hamilton writes, "Think of all those free man-hours Pharaoh has obtained from the Hebrews. Surely they are entitled to some financial/material compensation."[19] Philip Ryken makes a similar point: "This was God's way of making sure that his people got paid for all the work they did for Pharaoh, which was only fair!"[20] Other modern commentators explicitly use the language of "reparation."[21]

This text from Exodus is hardly the only one in the Bible relevant to the discussions of reparations. Duke L. Kwon and Gregory Thompson's *Reparations: A Christian Call for Repentance and Repair* points to reparations as the church's calling and responsibility. They explain that such reparations need to entail two key elements. The first is restitution, giving back what was wrongfully taken. They reference Zacchaeus, who pays back four times what he wrongfully took (Luke 19:1–10). They show how Zacchaeus's actions entail obedience to texts like Exodus 22:1, which says that thieves need to compensate their victims four or five times over.[22]

The second element of reparations is restoration, making the wronged person whole again. Here, Kwon and Thompson pay careful attention to the parable of the Good Samaritan, who ensures that the robbed person fully recovers and can move forward with health—even though the Samaritan did not personally cause the robbery and injury (Luke 10:25–37).[23]

Kwon and Thompson also look at the passage from Exodus 12.[24] It turns out that the word so oddly translated as "plunder" here almost always means "deliver," "rescue," or "save," as in Ezekiel 14:14.[25] There Ezekiel talks of

saintly people like Noah saving themselves from coming famine. If Exodus is using the word the same way as Ezekiel is, then the Israelites are not robbing the Egyptians—they're saving them. Indeed, just a few verses earlier, the Egyptians urged the Israelites to leave because they feared they would all die (12:33).[26] The Egyptians have already faced an onslaught of plagues, and they dread more coming. The best way to understand Exodus 12:36 (and the closely related 3:22) is that the Israelites rescue the Egyptians from God's ongoing judgment by asking for and receiving their valuables.

This gift giving does not make things perfectly even, but it does symbolize an end to hostilities. It signifies a new beginning. It demonstrates the Egyptians' readiness to relate to the Israelites in new ways. In an act of significant sacrifice, they surrender their greatest valuables with no strings attached. They demonstrate concretely that they are no longer going to exploit the Israelites. They give the Israelites the means to move forward not in destitution, but in prosperity.

And these reparations benefit not just the oppressed but also the oppressors. In Egyptian thinking, all facets of society were supposed to operate smoothly and in concert with one another. The infanticide, slavery, and plagues of Exodus left no doubt that Egyptian society had failed to reach its own goals. The only way to become a functioning society again was to address past wrongs in hopes of avoiding divine judgment.[27]

At their heart, reparations have always been about transforming broken societies into flourishing communities. Ta-Nehisi Coates rooted his groundbreaking essay "The Case for Reparations" in Deuteronomy 15:12–15, in which God commands that the Israelites set their Hebrew slaves free after six years of service.[28] The text also specifies that the Israelites must outfit the freed slaves with an abundance of gifts, including food and wine for the short term and farm animals that would enable former slaves to generate long-term income. Sheep and goats served as a sort of ancient savings account, giving people assets that could be eaten or traded during a drought or other crisis.[29]

These biblical stipulations don't exactly call for 40 acres and a mule, but they aren't far removed from such an idea. Indeed, George Fox, the founder of the Quaker movement, appealed directly to this Deuteronomy text in the 1600s when advocating something very similar to reparations. He urged slaveholders to set their slaves free after a period of service, and he added, "When they go, and are made free, *let them not go away empty-handed*, this I say will be very acceptable to the Lord, whose Servants we are."[30]

The promise of restitution for slavery recurs elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible as well. In Genesis 15:14, God promises Abraham that after centuries of slavery, his descendants will leave an oppressive land with great wealth. Then, amid Moses' call, God tells him that the Israelites will go out of Egypt with gold, silver, and clothing, which will be gifts for the next generation (Exod.

3:20–22). Later, just before the original Passover, God tells Moses it's time to fulfill this earlier promise (11:2–3). Finally, as the Israelites get ready to leave Egypt, they ask the Egyptians for silver, gold, and clothing—and the Egyptians freely give it. Much later in the Bible, Psalm 105:37–38 celebrates that these gifts were given.

These repeated references to the Egyptians giving their greatest valuables amid the Israelites' emancipation make clear that the writers of scripture don't want us to miss this essential point: enslavers owe a debt. And, despite many protestations to the contrary, it can be paid by giving valuables that ensure the success of freed slaves and their descendants. In Exodus 3:22 it's clear that these reparations are for the descendants of slaves, too. The Egyptians' silver, gold, and clothing will be placed on Israelite children. It's a time of hope in new beginnings for future generations.[31]

Further, understanding texts in the Torah as calling for reparations for slavery, or something very close to it, is consonant with other biblical teachings. In Genesis, gift giving serves to resolve conflicts, facilitate forgiveness, and move past wrongdoings. When Abram's and Lot's shepherds can't get along, Abram lets Lot have his choice of land (Gen. 13:5–12). When the Philistines and Isaac come close to violence over who possesses which wells, Isaac cedes land he could claim as his own (Gen. 26:12–33). Amid painful strife, Rachel and Leah exchange gifts and privileges to find a way forward (Gen. 30:14–18). When Esau looks ready for revenge, Jacob gives an abundance of gifts to make up for terrible wrongdoings (Gen. 32:3–21, 33:1–17).[32]

It's not that wrongdoers can pay bribes to make artificial peace. Rather, sacrifices of significance introduce alternate logics and ways of being in the world. They function as catalysts of reconciliation.[33] They work sacramentally as outward and visible signs of inward and invisible changes of attitude. They demonstrate when repentance is real. It's hard to overestimate the costs of reparations, but it's also hard to overestimate their potential for healing.

In one of the most famous sermons in American history, preached on January 1, 1808, Absalom Jones begins by describing Israelite slavery in ways that easily connect with American slavery: "They were compelled to work in the open air, in one of the hottest climates in the world: and, probably, without a covering from the burning rays of the sun."[34] After talking about God's intervention in Egypt, he reminds his listeners that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. With those words, he pivots from the past to the present, proclaiming that God is now at work in abolishing the transatlantic slave trade:

> Dear land of our ancestors! thou shalt no more be stained with the blood of thy children, shed by British and American hands: the ocean shall no more afford a refuge to their bodies, from impending slavery: nor shall the shores of

> the British West India islands, and of the United States, any more witness the anguish of families, parted for ever by a publick sale. For this signal interposition of the God of mercies, in behalf of our brethren, it becomes us this day to offer up our united thanks.[35]

The first time I read that sermon to a group of undergraduate students, a Black student expressed discomfort with the idea that it was already time to offer thanks. He knew that while the slave trade and even slavery itself may have ended, he still wasn't in the promised land. Allen Dwight Callahan makes the same point in *The Talking Book*: for African Americans, the period since the Emancipation Proclamation relates best not to times of thriving in a land of milk and honey but rather to times of wandering in the grueling heat of the desert, not yet free to enjoy the blessings of a good land.[36]

A report from the Economic Policy Institute makes clear just how much the United States still resembles a barren wasteland for many African Americans: "With respect to homeownership, unemployment, and incarceration, America has failed to deliver any progress for African Americans over the last five decades." The median household wealth of Black families is about one-tenth that of White families. Only 41 percent of Black Americans are homeowners, compared with 71 percent of White Americans. For every 100,000 Black Americans, 1,730 are incarcerated, compared with 270 of every 100,000 White Americans. It goes on. The persistent inequalities of both economics and opportunity are staggering.[37]

In the Bible, the Israelites do not wake up in the promised land the day after leaving Egypt. For 40 long years, they eked out an existence under oppressive desert heat. What happens to them there is often overlooked—but it is relevant to our American context.

Some of the most disturbing stories in the book of Numbers involve people who try to prevent the Israelites from making it to the promised land. At least four different groups of people do all they can to block the Israelites on their journey (20:14–21, 21:1–3, 21–35, 22:1–24:25). Repeatedly, the Israelites ask in the politest terms possible just to pass through others' land. They promise not to take so much as a drop of water, a grain of barley, or a single grape—in fact, they say that they'll avoid wells, fields, and vineyards altogether. They just need to make it to Canaan.

But the powers and principalities of that age do all they can to block the Israelites. They refuse passage. They deny water. They attack the Israelites instead. They take them captive. They even try to use religion—a famous holy man named Balaam—to try to curse this group of former slaves.

These people never succeed. They instead bring down God's judgment upon themselves. Instead of creating relationships of respect and kindness with the Israelites, those who obstruct their progress end up losing their

safety, homes, and lives because they're working against the God who always wants to set the captives free. In their fear of the Israelites, they desperately cling to their land and power, and they lose everything.

The White church in America is becoming increasingly aware of how much it resembles these people in Numbers who deny passageway to the promised land. As it does, it faces questions. Will it continue to forbid entry, or will it recognize that recompense is due? Will it—like the Egyptians—be saved?

## NOTES

1. Copyright © 2022 by the *Christian Century*. Reprinted by permission from the Jan 12, 2022, issue of the *Christian Century*, accessed May 19, 2023, https://www.christiancentury.org/article/critical-essay/book-exodus-includes-story-about-reparations-slavery. Endnotes have been added, and some changes have been made. The article's original title in print was "Saving the Egyptians: Exodus 12 Tells a Story of Reparations for Slavery." The original title online was "The Book of Exodus Includes a Story about Reparations for Slavery."

2. Equating the Egyptians with "bad guys" is a problem that this article seeks to address. For more on the topic, see Safwat Marzouk, "The Exodus: A Christian Egyptian Perspective," *HuffPost*, Dec 16, 2014, accessed May 19, 2023, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/the-exodus-a-christian-eg_b_6330118.

3. Erna Kim Hackett, "Why I Stopped Talking about Racial Reconciliation and Started Talking about White Supremacy," *Inheritance*, Mar 25, 2020, accessed May 19, 2023, https://www.inheritancemag.com/stories/why-i-stopped-talking-about-racial-reconciliation-and-started-talking-about-white-supremacy.

4. Benjamin Sass writes, "jewelry is an investment, and in precoinage times (and later) could be used as money" ("Jewelry," *OEANE* 3:238–46, here 238).

5. Some interpreters have claimed that the text envisions an epic battle between Pharaoh (or the gods of Egypt) and the God of Israel (e.g., Godfrey Ashby, *Go Out and Meet God: A Commentary on the Book of Exodus* [ITC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998], 24, 50, 58; Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary* [OTL; Louisville: Westminster, 1974], 175–77; Thomas B. Dozeman, *Commentary on Exodus* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009], 138–39; Donald E. Gowan, *Theology in Exodus: Biblical Theology in the Form of a Commentary* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994], 136; Waldemar Janzen, *Exodus* [Believers Church Bible Commentary; Waterloo, ON: Herald, 2000], 69–70, 134; Philip Graham Ryken (*Exodus: Saved for God's Glory* [Preaching the Word; Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005], 351; cf. John I. Durham, *Exodus* [WBC; Waco, TX: Word, 1987], 168). Because Israel's God gives victory, the Israelites get the spoils of battle. Some parts of Exodus allude to such a battle (e.g., 15:3, 11–12). What the text says explicitly, however, is that the Israelites asked the Egyptians for the most valuable objects of their time—and the Egyptians gave such treasures. Such developments hardly sound like warfare. Josephus even partially credits friendship between Egyptians and

Hebrew (*Ant.* 2.314), and more recently, Carol Meyers speaks of "a close relationship, perhaps a neighborhood network" ("Egyptian Women [Exod 3:22; 11:2]," *Women in Scripture: A Dictionary of Named and Unnamed Women in the Hebrew Bible, the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books, and the New Testament* [ed. Carol Meyers; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000], 188–89, here 189; see also Göran Larsson, *Bound for Freedom: The Book of Exodus in Jewish and Christian Traditions* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999], 94). Cf. the Egyptians' "genuine sympathy" and "gesture of solidarity" described by George V. Pixley, *On Exodus: A Liberation Perspective* (trans. Robert R. Barr; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1987), 59.

6. George Coats, "Despoiling the Egyptians," *VT* 18 (1968): 450–57; cf. Vulgate of 12:36; *Mekilta* 12:35; Julian Morgenstern, "The Despoiling of the Egyptians," *JBL* 68 (1949): 1–28, esp. 3–5; Martin Noth, *Exodus: A Commentary* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), 93–94, 98.

7. Cf. Terence E. Fretheim, *Exodus* (IBC; Louisville: John Knox, 1991), 67.

8. E.g., Solomon Goldman, *The Book of Human Destiny: From Slavery to Freedom* (London: Abelard-Schuman, 1958), 194–95, 199; Roland Gradwohl, "*Niṣṣal* und *hiṣṣîl* als Rechtsbegriffe im Sklavenrecht," *ZAW* 111 (1999): 187–95, here 188.

9. Cf. Fretheim, *Exodus*, 131.

10. The word שׁאל appears in Exod 3:22; 11:2; 12:35–36. Although Exod 22:13; 2 Kgs 4:3; 6:5 use this term to talk about borrowing, the word can also refer to a request for a gift, as seen in Judg 5:25; 8:24; 1 Kgs 3:5, 10–11, 13 (//2 Chr 1:7, 11); 1 Kgs 10:13 (//2 Chr 9:12); 2 Chr 11:23; Ps 21:5[4]. According to BDB (specifically its discussion of this word in Exod 3:22, 11:2, and 12:35), "it is . . . not clear that there was any pretext of mere temporary use." See also Durham, *Exodus*, 148; P. Galpaz-Feller, "Silver and Gold, Exodus 3:22," *RB* 109 (2002): 197–209, esp. 199; Benno Jacob, *The Second Book of the Bible: Exodus* (trans. Walter Jacob in association with Yaakov Elman; Hoboken, NJ: KTAV, 1992), 338–46; Morgenstern, "Despoiling," 3–5; Th. C. Vriezen, "A Reinterpretation of Exodus 3:21–22 and Related Texts," *JEOL* 23 (1973–74): 389–401, here 392–94.

11. The word is נצל.

12. Galpaz-Feller ("Silver," esp. 197, see also 207) proposes that "the motif of accepting gifts of silver, gold and garments from Egypt could be a form of literary expression of a common Egyptian custom symbolizing a new status adapted by the Bible and used for theological purposes" (cf. Fretheim, *Exodus*, 142).

13. James C. VanderKam, *Jubilees: A Commentary on the Book of Jubilees* (2 vols.; Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2018), 2.1147, 1163–64.

14. Pierluigi Lanfranchi, *L'*Exagoge *d'Ezéchiel le Tragique: Introduction, texte, traduction et commentaire* (Studia in Veteris Testamenti Pseudepigrapha 21; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 106, 219–20, lines 162–66.

15. *Moses* 1.141–42 (Colson, LCL).

16. *Marc.* 4.24 (*ANF* 3.387); see also 2.20 (*ANF* 3.313).

17. Analogous comments can be found in the Middle Ages in Bachya ben Asher, *Torah Commentary* (trans. Eliyahu Munk; Jerusalem: KTAV, 1998), accessed May 19, 2023, https://www.sefaria.org/Rabbeinu_Bahya%2C_Shemot.11.2.1?lang=bi&with

=About&lang2=en (see comment on *Shemot* 11:2); *Barhebraeus' Scholia on the Old Testament Part I: Genesis—II Samuel* (edited by Martin Sprengling and William Creighton Graham; OIP 13; Chicago: University of Chicago University Press, 1931), 105.

18. Martin R. Delany, *Blake, or the Huts of America* (ed. Jermone McGann; corrected ed.; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017), 44, cf. 318n42.

19. Victor P. Hamilton, *Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 67–68.

20. Ryken, *Exodus*, 107.

21. William Johnstone, *Exodus 1–19* (Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary; Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2014), 236; George A. F. Knight, *Theology as Narration: A Commentary on the Book of Exodus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 27, cf. 82–83.

22. Duke L. Kwon and Gregory Thompson, *Reparations: A Christian Call for Repentance and Repair* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2021), 133–56, esp. 137–43.

23. Kwon and Thompson, *Reparations*, 157–80, esp. 162–80.

24. Kwon and Thompson, *Reparations*, 156, esp. 239n78.

25. The word נצל appears in the *pi'el* stem in Exod 3:22, 12:36; 2 Chr 20:25, and Ezek 14:14 (though some argue against the MT that וְנִצָּלוּ in Ezek 14:14 should be read as a *nip'al* [e.g., F. L. Hossfeld and B. Kalthoff, "נצל," *TDOT* 9.533–540, here 539] or *hip'il* [e.g., Robert L. Hubbard, "5911 נצל," *NIDOTTE* 3.141–147, here 142]). While there are not many appearances of the word in the *pi'el*, נצל has over 200 appearances in other stems, where the meaning connects with "deliver/rescue/save" much more frequently than "plunder." It can be translated "plunder" only in Gen 31:9, 16; Exod 33:6; 1 Sam 30:22; 2 Chr 20:25; Hos 2:11[9]; cf. 2 Sam 20:6. Elsewhere, the word relates to rescuing, delivering, or a similar concept.

Over 89% of the appearances of נצל are in the *hip'il*, where the meaning typically is "to rescue." Although the *pi'el* and *hip'il* should not be conflated, they can have similarities, particularly relating to causation (GKC §52*g*; *IBHS* §21.2.2c, 24.1i; Christo H. J. van der Merwe, Jacobus A. Naudé, and Jan H. Kroeze, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar* [2nd ed.; London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2017], 81, §16.4.2.1). As Paul Joüon and T. Muraoka put it, "Some verbs . . . do occur in both Piel and Hifil with scarcely discernible difference in meaning or nuance. . . . It is only rarely possible to distinguish between Piel and Hifil thus used" (Joüon 1.156, §52*d*[3]). Here, it appears that both the *pi'el* and the *hip'il* of נצל basically mean "to cause to be moved" (the movement often being from an undesirable place to a desirable one; so Matthew Richard Schlimm, *70 Hebrew Words Every Christian Should Know* [Nashville: Abingdon, 2018], 85–88). Generally speaking, when the object being moved is a person (or life, or location that includes living inhabitants), the verb means to "rescue." When the object being moved is impersonal, however, then the meaning tends toward "plunder" (Benno Jacob, "Gott und Pharao," *MGWJ* 68 [1924]: 268–89, here 288; Jacob, *Second Book*, 345). Exodus 3:22 and 12:36 are more like the verses where the word should be translated "rescue" because the entity being moved is the Egyptians, not an impersonal object. See also the helpful discussion in Vriezen, "Reinterpretation," 394–400.

26. Josephus asserts that Egyptians gave gifts in hopes that the Israelites would leave quickly so that "Egypt's sufferings would cease" (*Ant.* 2.314 [Thackeray, LCL]; see also David Daube, *The Exodus Pattern in the Bible* [London: Faber and Faber, 1963], 59; Jacob, *Second Book*, 345; Morgenstern, "Despoiling," 22; Pixley, *Exodus*, 23, 59).

27. A core Egyptian concept is *ma'at*, which entails justice and order. When things are rightly ordered and operating in accordance with *ma'at*, then prosperity and goodness ensue. When deviations from *ma'at* occur, then events go badly and divine judgment follows. See, e.g., Miriam Lichtheim, *Moral Values in Ancient Egypt* (OBO 155; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), 42–43; Roland E. Murphy, *The Tree of Life: An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 115, 161; K. A. D. Smelik, "Ma'at," *DDD* 534–35. For primary texts, see the useful indexes in *AEL* 1.245, 2.239.

Pharaoh in particular was expected to embody the principle of *ma'at*, and the book of Exodus relentlessly portrays pharaoh as unable to live by, rule by, or listen to *ma'at*.

28. Ta-Nehisi Coates, "The Case for Reparations," *The Atlantic*, June 2014, accessed May 19, 2023, https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/. Links between Exod 3:21–22, 12:35–36, and Deut 15:12–15 are also explored in U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus* (trans. Israel Abrahams; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1967), 44; Daube, *Pattern*, 55–61; Gradwohl, "Rechtsbegriffe," 190–93; Moshe Greenberg, *Understanding Exodus* (New York: Behrman, 1969), 86–87; Johnstone, *Exodus 1–19*, 87, 94, 200, 236.

29. Nathan MacDonald, *What Did the Ancient Israelites Eat? Diet in Biblical Times* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 59. Cf. Gen 47:15–17.

30. George Fox, *Gospel Family-Order, Being a Short Discourse Concerning the Ordering of Families, Both of Whites, Blacks, and Indians* (Ann Arbor: Text Creation Partnership, 2011), 17, accessed May 19, 2023, https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/evans/N00809.0001.001?rgn=main;view=fulltext.

31. Cf. Jacob, "Gott und Pharao," 288–89.

32. The generosity in some of these episodes is further explored in Matthew R. Schlimm, *From Fratricide to Forgiveness: The Language and Ethics of Anger in Genesis* (Siphrut; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 145–49, 166–69, 182–83. Gradwohl ("Rechtsbegriffe," 193–94) claims that the treasures received by the enslaved parties should not be seen as gifts but as wages due to them. Given Deut 15:12–15, there may be some truth in this claim. More evidence from Gradwohl would be helpful, however. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that other biblical and ancient Near Eastern texts present giving as a way of alleviating anger and hostilities: Prov 21:14, 25:21–22; "The Story of Idrimi, King of Alalakh," (*ANET*, 557–58); "Emesh and Enten: Enlil Chooses the Farmer-God," pp. 49–51 in S. N. Kramer, *Sumerian Mythology: A Study of Spiritual and Literary Achievement in the Third Millennium B. C.* (Memoirs of the American Philosophical Society; Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1944); "Horus and Seth" (*AEL* 2:214–23, esp. 215, 222); "Counsels of Wisdom," pp. 96–107 in W. G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975) 101, lines 41–45.

33. Cf. Larsson, *Freedom*, 94.

34. Absalom Jones, "A Thanksgiving Sermon: Preached January 1, 1808, In St. Thomas's, or the African Episcopal, Church, Philadelphia: On Account of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade, On That Day, by the Congress of the United States," in *American Sermons: The Pilgrims to Martin Luther King Jr.* (ed. Michael Warner; New York: The Library of America, 1999), 538–545, here 538.

35. Jones, "Thanksgiving," 541.

36. Allen Dwight Callahan, *The Talking Book: African Americans and the Bible* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 132–37.

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