

Israel in Slavery and Slavery in Israel

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C. J. H. Wright notes that most epics of national origin were elaborate ethnic myths meant to inspire worship of the nation's ancestral past. By contrast, Israel openly recorded that they emerged from state-imposed slavery that became increasingly difficult and inhumane.¹ Consequently, their post-liberation legislation seems consistent with the reality of being *former* slaves. This truth produced a certain tension within Israel. On the one hand, they accepted the *status quo* reality of slavery. On the other hand, their legislation produced a covenant-subversiveness² that emphasized the ideal of personal freedom. A canonical reading reveals that the biblical writers considered slavery a historical reality that sets the canonical stage for God's revelation of Himself through His sustaining, redeeming, and shaping Israel both as a nation and as a community of faith. Further, a deepened awareness of slavery in Exodus yields a better understanding of Israel's liberation and legislation, which are both central to the history of redemption.

Coming to Terms with Slavery in Exodus

The primary Hebrew root used most often to denote slavery is עִבַּד.³ The verb עִבַּד occurs 317 times in the Old Testament and typically means "to serve."⁴ The nominal form of the root appears over twice as often as the verbal form (over 800 times).⁵ Like the verbal form, more often than not, the term indicates a "servant."⁶ However, the substantive may also mean "slave, subject, official, or vassal." It can

also refer to the follower/ servant of a particular god.⁷ Throughout Exodus, Moses predominately uses the term עִבַּד for slave talk. When עִבַּד means "slave,"⁸ Moses distinguishes it from שָׂכִיר, "servant"⁹ and at times sets it in correspondence with the feminine form אִמָּה, meaning "female servant."¹⁰ As with other common terms in the biblical text, context determines which reference Moses was making. The context of עִבַּד in Exodus grants the reader clarity as to the two distinct meanings that the single root holds in the same book.

עִבַּד appears in two major pericopes within Exodus, chapters 1-12 and the Covenant Regulations in 20:22-23:33. When using עִבַּד within the first twelve chapters of Exodus, there is little doubt that Moses is referring to enslavement, not servanthood of the Hebrews (1:8-21). In Exod 1:13-14 Moses states that the Egyptians made the sons of Israel "work as slaves" (ESV). However, the Masoretic Text conveys a more difficult portrait of the Israelite's lot. עִבַּד denotes the various and harsh "labors" that Egypt had imposed onto Israel (1:14). The form again appears in Exod 6:5, preceded by the preposition בְּ translated as "bondage" or "enslavement." This occurrence emerges in the context of the promise to the fathers. The reference to the promise emphasizes not only their prisoner status, "bondage," but their landlessness.¹¹ Exodus 9:20-21 references the Egyptian's personal slaves, which, by contrast, highlights the "prisoner of war" type slave that Israel has become. Moreover, note that in this passage the Egyptians treat the Israelites

as livestock—as goes the livestock so goes the slave. In the regulations for the Passover (Exod 12:44), the term is clearly balanced against the “hired servant” (שָׂכִיר). The term is attached to the term “man” rendering “slave-man.” This occurrence is the only appearance of this particular construction.

Within the Covenant Regulations (Exod 20:22-23:33), there is a marked change in the usage of the term עֶבֶד. In chapters 1-12 the term is synonymous with affliction, backbreaking work, and property status. In the Covenant Regulations, the term appears in Israelite legislation with a new hue. The term refers to people of unequal status but equal personhood. It is institutionalized in a different sense than that of Egypt, whether the Old Kingdom slave, attached to the land and homes of their owner forever or the eighteenth-dynasty prisoner of war slave paradigm the Israelites experienced. This term now signifies individuals whose dignity is to be guarded and whose release must be eventually secured. In regard to the past point, the law of manumission begins in Exodus 21. The phrase עֶבֶד עֶבֶר occurs only here in this passage. The debate that surrounds the term עֶבֶר is beyond the scope of the current project. There seems to be enough evidence to take the term as a pejorative ethnic derivation that applies to “outsiders” in general and Israelites in particular. Of the thirty occurrences of the term, it is applied to Israel to contrast them with the Egyptians (Gen 39:14; 41:12; 43:32; Exod 1:15; 2:1, 6; 3:18) or with the Philistines (1 Sam 4:6; 13:3; 14:11, etc.). Exodus 21:1 seems to indicate that the term became coterminous with “Israelite.”¹² The Hebrew slave is freed by his owner after six years of servitude. However, the nature of freedom seems

qualified. If he wants to retain his wife whom he acquired while in slavery he must stay.¹³ The text notes that the slave may stay out of love for his wife and master. Childs asserts that this occurrence of “love” should not be romanticized.¹⁴ However, that argument only makes sense if the master would have been the only one mentioned. The slave wife appears alongside the owner, however, and thus provides a definite filial tone to the possibly emancipated slave’s decision.¹⁵

As mentioned above, the biblical writers use the corresponding terms עֶבֶד and אִמָּה. The normal rendering of אִמָּה is “female slave.” The term conveys not only the slave’s gender but her concubine status with respect to her master (Gen 21:10, 12, 13; Lev 25:6). While not being able to go free as the male slaves—which would not have been ideal for her in the first place—she is afforded rights within the larger familial structure. There are three scenarios that threaten her status as an אִמָּה. First, she may not please her master who has designated her to this status for himself (21:8). In this case, she must be ransomed by her family / people. Second, the אִמָּה may be designated for the owner’s son (21:9). In this case, she is to be treated as a daughter, with all rights and privileges afforded her. Third, the owner may take another wife (21:10). In this final case, she still maintains full marital rights.

Concerning the possible bodily injuries that a slave might incur, both terms, עֶבֶד and אִמָּה appear in Exod 21:20-32. The loss of dignity and the removal of oppression appear front and center here. In 21:26, עֶבֶד balances the occurrence of the term in 21:20. The latter context displays the *status quo* concept of inferior status. The former occurrence examined alongside 21:32 helps convey the tension within

Israelite legislature of the slave as inferior in social status but equal in personage and extends dignity toward all slaves for any bodily injury. Childs notes that a slave is not freed because of property damage but because he is an oppressed human being.¹⁶ If a male or female slave is gored by an ox and does not die, the ox still dies just as in the case of the free man or woman and the minor male or female (21:29-31). The gravity of the punishment is different due to the social status of the slave over against the free person. This element is consistent with the Ancient Near East (ANE) policy of slaves as socially inferior to the free. However, the concept of personhood also appears here in contrast to similar legislation just below. In 21:33-36, the writer deals with similar scenarios, but with animals. Thus, the ox that falls prey to the goring ox costs his owner money, not blood, even of the goring ox. Thus, the עֶבֶד is not as cattle (cf. the Egyptian perspective above). The slave is treated as a person both in the arrangement of the legislation and the treatment within the legislation.

Thus, in Exodus, with respect to chapters 1-12, the עֶבֶד denoted the institutionally afflicted individual that worked on state managed building projects. Concerning the עֶבֶד in the Covenant Regulations, he is an individual who lacks the status of the free man but not the dignity of personhood as the free man. The above findings gain clarity under a historical and canonical analysis of slavery in Exodus.

Israel in Slavery: A Historical Analysis

Concerning the oppression of the Hebrew people, even some of the most critical scholars have recognized how well the biblical narrative fits the Egyptian

setting, and many have also affirmed that the nature of the biblical story demands at least some actual event in Israel's past. For example, Sir Allan Gardiner, one of the leading Egyptologists of the last century as well as a rigid historical critic of the biblical testimony, asserted the following:

[That] Israel *was in Egypt* under one form [of oppression] or another no historian could possibly doubt; a legend of such tenacity representing the early fortunes of a peoples under so unfavorable an aspect could not have arisen save as a reflection, however much distorted, of real occurrences.¹⁷

The epigraphic data found in Egyptian inscriptions and annals details a significant influx of Semitic peoples between the eighteenth dynasty and the accession of Ramses II.¹⁸ Significantly more than finding Semitic names as far south as Thebes (in Deir el-Medineh) during the Empire Period,¹⁹ the portrait of the age aligns closely with the picture of Israelite slavery found in Exodus. Brickmaking²⁰ seems to be a verified act of slave labor that included unattainable quotas set by a two-tiered Egyptian administration including the mention of "stick-wielding" taskmasters ready to "encourage" the apathetic. There is also evidence of Semitic peoples clearly involved with state-sponsored building projects and worker requests for time off for worship of one's personal deity. I will address each of these in turn.

The third millennium witnessed no support of state-enforced labor in Egypt. A land-bound serfdom existed in Egypt during this time.²¹ Foreigners were typically immigrants, slave tribute from local rulers, prisoners of war, or slaves purchased through merchants. They characteristically functioned in the service of households or in temple employment.

This scene changed during the New Kingdom. This sudden turn in occupation parallels Egypt's new policy of wider border control during this period of time.²² For 350 years, Egypt waged military campaigns in Canaan and Syria that resulted in large numbers of Semites being transported from their countries to Egypt.²³ The most notable example of this appears in the tomb chapel of the vizier Rekhmire (ca. 1450), where one may observe foreign slaves making bricks for state-sponsored building projects²⁴ under the watching eyes of their rod-bearing overseers.²⁵ Kitchen cites numerous accounts of quotas being set for the workers and recorded afterwards,²⁶ including a letter from a rather annoyed Egyptian official stating that "There are no [men] here to make bricks, and no straw in the district either."²⁷

In the second millennium slave labor was pervasively state labor. Not only does one find evidence of this in the tomb chapel scene of Rekhmire, but also in other inscriptions throughout Egypt. Kitchen notes that Ramses II gave no thought to forcibly conscripting foreigners for state sponsored projects. He commands grain rations for both his soldiers as well as the "Apiru-folk"²⁸ during a building project for one of his namesake projects, the "Temple of Ramses II Beloved of Ma'at."²⁹ The practical administrative structure of these projects seemed to look like the two-tiered model found in Exodus. On the top tier was Egyptian overseers and below them a foreman, typically an ethnic native to the slaves, set over the workers but under the Egyptians.³⁰

Exodus records that Moses petitioned Pharaoh to allow the slaves time off for worship (Exod 5:1-4). Egyptian documentation of the thirteenth and twelfth

centuries in particular portrays a similar landscape. Kitchen notes that very detailed work records demonstrate that an individual or entire crew could be absent for several days for worship. While the reasons provided in the registers vary, they include the phrase that a man might be able "to make an offering to his god."³¹

Straw-based brickmaking, a two-tiered Egyptians administration, a "prisoner of war" type slavery for Semitic peoples, and requests for cultic holidays seem to have existed in both Egyptian history and Israel's Scriptures. Thus, one may argue that the Egyptian historical landscape reflected the same social and historical backdrop as Moses presents, which, in turn, provides the reader with an accurate historical portrait of Israel's period of slavery.

Israel in Slavery: A Canonical Analysis

David Clines argues for the following overarching theme of the Torah:

The theme of the Pentateuch is the partial fulfillment—which implies also the partial non-fulfillment—of the promise to or blessing of the patriarchs. The promise or blessing is both the divine initiative in a world where human initiatives always lead to disaster, and a reaffirmation of the primal divine intentions for man.³²

A canonical analysis of the slavery texts in Exodus raises the question, "When Israel read this text as Scripture, how did they understand the notion of slavery within the larger theme of God's promise/fulfillment to the Patriarchs?" Thus, unlike the historical analysis that appears above, canonical analysis exposes the testimony of the biblical writers within the larger metanarrative. As historical

analysis seeks to place the testimony of Israel into its larger ANE context, so canonical analysis seeks to demonstrate that the historical testimony of Israel has been shaped to say something expressly theological about Israel and her God. The testimony of Exodus demonstrates at least three things about Israel and Yahweh. First, slavery in Exodus is always in the context of the Divine Warrior's fear-inspiring power. This reality provides the stage on which God reveals himself and his nature in word, mighty acts of redemption, and promise-fulfillment. Second, slavery demonstrated the frailty of Israel in either affecting its own release from bondage or its subsequent living in light of liberation. Slavery in Israel provides a further canonical point, namely that slave legislation as it is canonically shaped in Exodus serves as a paradigm of liberation, which defines the true nature of the covenant community.

The theme of the Torah provides a dramatic moment in the enslavement of the Hebrew people. The biblical writers clearly denote that the slavery was harsh, institutionalized, without any end in sight, and divinely orchestrated. The book of Exodus commences with an immediate look back to the final Jacob narratives in Genesis (Gen 37:1-2), the Joseph story (Genesis 37-50): "Now there arose a new king over Egypt, *who did not know Joseph*" (Exod 1:8). Further, the Joseph narratives appear within the larger framework of the promise/fulfillment narratives in Genesis. The foretelling of the enslavement of Israel occurs first in Gen 15:12-16:

As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram. And behold, dreadful and great darkness fell upon him. Then the LORD said to Abram, "Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not

theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. As for yourself, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete" (Gen 15:12-16).

Thus, canonically, the slavery of Abraham's offspring was explicitly known and accomplished by God. Note also that the promise of enslavement takes place in the context of Yahweh's fear-inspiring power. Wenham notes that "deep sleep," "fear," and "darkness"—the latter two which Egypt experienced in the plagues (Exod 10:21-28)—suggested God's awe inspiring activity.³³ Slavery would be the landscape upon which God would work his great act of liberation and display himself as incomparable and peerless among the gods of the ancient world, particularly Egypt. Israel would experience a landless alien status that would spiral further into forced servitude. They would be without land, value, and hope and, they would remain in this condition at the very hand of their Redeemer. The remainder of the slave promise demonstrates that God's promise of affliction and servitude is not without hope. "But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions" (Gen 15:14).

An enslavement-hope mixture appears again in the Joseph narratives (Genesis 37-50). Joseph's presumptive and naïve action in sharing his dreams with his older brothers provides him with the opportunity for world travel. Unfortunately, it is in the form of slavery. The series of crisis-resolution events in the narrative

culminate in one of the Torah's highest statements of God's sovereignty.

But Joseph said to them, "Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? As for you, *you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.* So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones." Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them (Gen 50:19-21).

Joseph's enslavement was meant for the sustenance of the covenant line. Regardless of what his brothers had in mind, God had sovereignly orchestrated Joseph's life to include forced servitude in order to place him in a position to save the lives of his covenant bearing family.

The enslavement of Jacob's family in the book of Exodus is the result of political expediency from the "new" pharaoh, who lacked any impressionable connection to Joseph and perceived Israel as a possible future political threat (1:9-10). It is also the turning point of God working out His providential plan on behalf of the children of Abraham.³⁴

Now there arose a new king over Egypt, *who did not know Joseph.* And he said to his people, "Behold, the people of Israel are too many and too mighty for us. Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and, if war breaks out, they join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land." Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with heavy burdens. They built for Pharaoh store cities, Pithom and Raamses. But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and the more they spread abroad. And the Egyptians were in dread of the people of Israel. *So they ruthlessly made the people of Israel work as slaves and made their lives bitter with hard service, in mortar and brick, and in all kinds of work in the field. In all their work they ruthlessly made them work as slaves* (Exod 1:8-22).

Israel must not have been too mighty, in the sense of actually being able to overpower Egypt, or the Pharaoh would not have been able to forcibly conscript them into service.³⁵ He feared that their numbers were "too mighty" in the sense of a possible *coup* and escape. "Let us deal shrewdly with them" clearly indicates an intentional political maneuver executed under the guise of "mutual respect." Durham understands the entire scenario to be a ruse. The people are not "too mighty" at all. Instead, the Pharaoh uses fear as political justification in turning this large group of foreigners into slaves.³⁶

Three basic levels of ANE culture existed during this time: freemen, slaves, and a semi-free populace. This three-tiered culture maintained three levels of labor: independent labor of free peasants or craftsmen, slave labor, and labor from various semi-free groups. The Egyptians might have suggested a freepeasant/craftsmen type relationship with Israel. Since the text indicates that Israel had neither the will nor the capacity to fight (Exod 13:17), after moving them into place logistically, Egypt would have little resistance assuming a more aggressive posture.

After Pharaoh's murderous response to the rupture of his first idea, he imposes a harsh servitude on Israel. Exodus describes slavery here as the type of exploitive institution that one might equate with the transatlantic slave movement or with the modern slave trade. The Egyptian enslavement of the Israelites includes harsh, backbreaking treatment. This type of oppressive situation appears five times within this paragraph, establishing the character of Israel's slavery. Their work entailed agonizing work hours under any conditions and forced servitude in state sanctioned building projects.

To further define the social position to which Israel had fallen, the Egyptian administration felt safe (even with the “mighty” population) attempting to target the Hebrew children for partial genocide (Exod 1:15-22).

The ongoing institutionalized aspect of Israel’s slavery appears again later in the story.

During those many days the king of Egypt died, and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. God saw the people of Israel—and God knew (Exod 2:23-25).

The fact that they groaned because of their slavery after the death of the Pharaoh that enslaved them seems to indicate that their slavery was now officially institutionalized. Where their enslavement was perhaps initially an attempt to curb their growth, reduce the possibility for a *coup*, and make impossible any attempt at escape, their slavery now goes beyond one king with a need for building programs. They are (and possibly always will be) slaves of Egypt. God hears their groaning and rescues them based upon his covenant with their fathers. The divine response to slavery is finally what the reader would expect. Redemption is drawing near!

“Say therefore to the people of Israel, ‘I am the LORD, and *I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I*

will give it to you for a possession. I am the LORD.’” Moses spoke thus to the people of Israel, but they did not listen to Moses, because of their broken spirit and harsh slavery (Exod 6:6-9).

This pericope occurs after Moses and Aaron first met with Pharaoh. The meeting went badly. Pharaoh repeated his perception of the threat of Israelite numbers and increased the burden and level of harshness on the Israelites due to Moses and Aaron. Their deliverance from slavery appears once again in the context of the covenant with the fathers. Concerning their deliverance from their harsh slavery, God established his national-covenant name and makes the following eight assertions of unprecedented fear-inspiring power (cf. Deut 4:32-40).

- I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and
- I will deliver you from slavery to them, and
- I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment.
- I will take you to be my people, and
- I will be your God, and
- You shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.
- I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.
- I will give it to you for a possession. I am the LORD.

The promise ties the people specifically to the land. The idea of slavery in Exodus 1-12 is harsh affliction that awaits redemption and land.

To celebrate the resolve and redemptive action of God and to execute his final fear-inspiring assault, he established a feast. The Passover had a limited set of guests: the landless and the slaves. Exodus 12:43ff reads as follows:

And the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, *"This is the statute of the Passover: no foreigner shall eat of it, but every slave that is bought for money may eat of it after you have circumcised him. No foreigner or hired servant may eat of it. It shall be eaten in one house; you shall not take any of the flesh outside the house, and you shall not break any of its bones. All the congregation of Israel shall keep it. If a stranger shall sojourn with you and would keep the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised. Then he may come near and keep it; he shall be as a native of the land. But no uncircumcised person shall eat of it. There shall be one law for the native and for the stranger who sojourns among you."*

There would be no foreigner or hired servant taking part. The only proper participants of the meal were the covenant people of God, who were also the slaves and slave-friendly peoples within Egypt. Even the one exception, the "stranger that sojourns with you" (Exod 12:48) may be seen as a landless slave type. Those who would sojourn with the slaves would certainly be numbered with the slaves. The feast made sense because it was accomplished on the landscape of forced slavery and the divine assault on the gods of Egypt that resulted in Israel's liberation.

Slavery in Israel: A Historical Analysis

One of the most significant points for the contemporary reader of the Bible and for the student of the ANE is the absolute absence of abolitionism in the ancient world. A slave as someone endowed with

personhood and rights was alien to the laws of the ANE. The primary premise of slavery was that the slave was property. Not only did free people take this perspective for granted, but so did the slave. An old Assyrian proverb sums up the ubiquitous ANE disposition in this way: "A man is the shadow of a god and a slave is the shadow of a man."³⁷

Overall, slavery in the ANE was an extreme form of personal dependence and extra-economic coercion.³⁸ Slaves were dehumanized to a very real degree. They had no means of personal economic mobility or production and were considered a thing to be bought, owned, and sold by their master. Thus, slaves had no rights. They had only duties. Like livestock, they were considered a tradable commodity. They were included in dowries, transferred in inheritances, and deposited as collateral. Examples of this mindset appear in both the Laws of Eshnunna and the laws of Hammurabi.

LE ¶40 – If a man buys a slave, a slave woman, an ox, or any other purchase.³⁹

LH ¶7 – If a man shall purchase silver, gold, a slave, a slave woman, an ox, a sheep, a donkey, or anything else whatsoever.⁴⁰

Complicating matters further, there was no standard for the treatment of slaves in the ANE. Concerning status, the basic cultural architecture of the ANE afforded the slave no more rights than it did any other piece of property. Slave owners placed an insignia on their slaves for the same reason that cattle are branded today, namely to demonstrate and identify ownership. The most frequent mode of insignia was tattooing the name of the owner onto the slave with a hot iron. In Assyria, the slave's ears were sometimes pierced. The Code of Hammurabi allowed

an owner to cut off the ear of a disobedient slave to serve as an example to others within the slave ranks.⁴¹ Hammurabi also presented warnings to those who would mistreat other's "slave-property." If a barber shaved an *abbuttum*⁴² from the head of a slave without the master's consent, the barber's hand would be cut off. Typical of ancient law, the regulation simply assumes a property value onto the slave.

By contrast, the Exodus legislation protected slaves. Women and children received due oversight. A female slave could not be sold to a foreigner (Exod 21:8) and was privy to equal rights of a free woman if adopted or given in marriage (21:9). Child slaves belonged to the slave owner. No children appear in Exodus 21. The text simply states that the man has a wife. Two laws in Exodus in particular protect a slave from his own master: "When a man strikes his slave, male or female, with a rod and the slave dies under his hand, *he shall be avenged*. But if the slave survives a day or two, he is not to be avenged, for the slave is his money" (Exodus 21:20-21).⁴³ Both the consistent and subversive nature of Israel's literature, with respect to slaves, appears here. The slave that recovers is not to be avenged due to the fact he/she belongs to the one who struck the slave; "the slave is his money." However, if the slave dies he is avenged as a freeman would be. Avenging a slave in the manner one would a free individual would have been unusual, to say the least, in the ANE.

Another law that chiseled away at the *status quo* concept of slavery in the ANE appears shortly after the above passage. When a man strikes the eye of his slave, male or female, and destroys it, *he shall let the slave go free because of his eye*. If he

knocks out the tooth of his slave, male or female, *he shall let the slave go free because of his tooth* (Exod 21:26-27). While the mention of the eye could be addressing the impairment of the slave's ability to carry out his/her duty, the mention of the tooth is altogether different. The major risk here is not the slave's duty but his dignity. Slaves in Israel could, by implication, appeal to the judiciary of Israel *against* their own masters. Wright comments that this would have been a unique right in the literature of the ANE.⁴⁴ Job 31:14 seems to corroborate this idea legislated in the Torah. Job states that in all of the legal proceedings brought against him by his own slaves, he had never denied them justice.

The monetary value of a slave or slaves varied from culture to culture and from time to time. Like anything else with market value, the slave's price increased throughout the centuries.⁴⁵ In the third millennium prices were ten to twenty shekels per slave. By the mid second millennium, documentation from Babylon and Mari priced a slave at twenty shekels while Nuzi annals cited a slave at thirty shekels. By late first millennium in Assyria and Neo-Babylon the price of the slave had soared to one hundred and twenty shekels.⁴⁶ In Israel's literature, Abraham, Solomon, and Hosea all purchased slaves.⁴⁷ In Exodus the only purchaser of a slave is God, who metaphorically purchases Israel by defeating the Egyptians (Exod 3:7; 15:16).⁴⁸ The other reference to monetary value is in 21:32, where the gored slave's owner received thirty shekels for the injury his slave incurred. Most notable is the lack of price listings in the Covenant Regulations. It further corroborates that Moses wants to display the tension between personhood and

social status.

Slaves often ran away in the ancient world. It was standard throughout almost the entire ANE when a fugitive slave was apprehended to incarcerate him/her and return him/her back to his/her owner. Examples can be seen from the Laws of Eshnunna.

LE ¶52 – A slave or a slave woman who has entered the main city gate of Eshnunna in the safekeeping of only a foreign envoy shall be made to bear fetters, shackles, or a slave hairlock and is thereby kept safe for his owner.⁴⁹

The Laws of Lipit-Ishtar obligates an individual who finds a slave to return them within one month to his/her master or pay twenty-five shekels of silver to the owner. Even more harsh treatment appears in the Code of Hammurabi, where one who either steals or conceals a fugitive slave is subject to the death penalty: “If a man should enable a palace slave, a palace slave woman, a commoner’s slave, or a commoner’s slave woman to leave through the main city-gate, he shall be killed” (LH ¶15).⁵⁰ One may find softer but similar legislation in the Laws of Eshnunna: “If a man should be seized with a stolen slave or a stolen slave woman, a slave shall lead a slave, a slave woman shall lead a slave woman” (LE ¶49).⁵¹

In contrast to the surrounding *status quo* stands legislation in Deuteronomy, which states that, if one found a runaway slave, one was not obligated to return him to his master but to protect him:

*You shall not give up to his master a slave who has escaped from his master to you. He shall dwell with you, in your midst, in the place that he shall choose within one of your towns, wherever it suits him. You shall not wrong him.*⁵²

The slave received protection from the community, chose for himself the town in which he wished to hide or live, and experienced justice within the community. The Israelite was then to comply with his request. While the contemporary ANE legal codes not only imposed severe penalties on runaway slaves but also on those who harbored them, Israel’s law diametrically opposed such behavior and encouraged the liberation of the slaves. One might presume that a runaway slave was fleeing from an abusive master; such was not tolerated in the codes of Israel.⁵³

Every ancient culture had manumission laws for slavery. The rights to free a slave belonged solely to the slave’s owner. There are documents as early as the third dynasty in Ur that contain accounts of the manumission of slaves.⁵⁴ There were a number of ways that one might release a slave. G. R. Driver and J. Miles record a rather common formula from Ur. Manumission took place before a magistrate, was officially documented, and precluded contest from the original owner.⁵⁵ The manner in which one was to release his slave is not detailed in the Book of the Covenant. However, contrasted with their ancient counterparts, Exodus contends that the slave may only serve for six years before his covenant mandated release: “When you buy a Hebrew slave, he shall serve six years, and in the seventh he shall go out free, for nothing” (Exod 21:2). The Sabbath pattern is striking. As Israel experienced the Sabbath of God’s provision and power first in Exodus 16 and commemorated it every week, they would treat their slaves with this idea of provision and power in mind. Though they were landless they still experienced provision and hope. Each time a slave was released, Israel provided a display of God’s redemptive power and

future hope.⁵⁶

In sum, slave legislation in the Book of the Covenant bore both the *status quo* mark of the ANE and the covenant-subversive mark of relationship with Yahweh. Their laws were in some ways typical of the culture and demonstrated that Israel's slave legislation was integral to a second millennium B.C. provenance. They had laws commenting on status, monetary value, runaways, and the manumission of slaves. However, there are distinctions that reveal the God of Israel and His subversive legislation. He exercises power and provision on behalf of Israel and extols his "covenant-subversive community" shaping concepts of righteousness and justice. The historical slave-master relationship in Israel is best stated later in Israel's history.

Slavery in Israel: A Canonical Analysis

The above discussion concerning Israel's legislation demonstrated that Exodus 21 slave laws were comparable to the legislation of its time yet differed at various junctures. They provide for the slave's dignity, and, while no abolition statement appears within the text, there is evidence of an understanding of the parity that exists between slave, semi-free, and free. It is important to note that these laws were given at the Sinai theophany after the most unprecedented demonstration of raw divine power the ANE had ever witnessed, i.e., the Exodus. These laws assume the need for further revelation of Yahweh and provide intentional community shaping for Israel. A canonical analysis of the slave laws raises at least the following three questions. First, why do the slave laws begin the Book of the Covenant? Second, when comparing and con-

trasting the slave legislation of Leviticus and Deuteronomy what do the differences tell us about slavery in Exodus? Third, how do the law codes function within the larger framework of the partially fulfilled promises to the patriarchs?

The immediate context of the slave laws appears as follows:

- Altar Laws (20:22-26)
- Slave Manumission Law (21:2-11)
- Capital Offenses (21:12-17)
- Laws Regulating Damage to the Body (21:18-36)
- Laws Regulating Damage to Property (21:27-22:16)
- Miscellaneous Cultic and Social Regulations (22:17-30)
- Laws Regulating Court Protocol (23:1-9)
- Cultic Calendar (23:10-19)
- Epilogue (23:20-33)

Phillips argues that the canonical placement of the manumission slave laws at the front of the covenant code asserts a "statement of belief about the true nature of Israelite society: it should be made up of free men."⁵⁷ For Moses, the new social and economic reality (namely that of desert sojourners) summons many humanitarian provisions concerning widows, orphans, foreigners, and the poor. Within those bounds, the slave legislation stands out as preeminent among humanitarian laws (21:2-11, 20-21, 26-27, 32). Economic situations might force an Israelite to renounce his true heritage, but his ultimate identity is not bound up in slavery but divinely orchestrated freedom.⁵⁸ The shape of Exodus 21 demonstrates the priority of manumission of Israelite slaves over the other modes of slave laws. By including the law of the gored slave in 21:32, Moses further distances the perception of the slave as less than human. This placement emphasizes a trajectory that Leviticus

and Deuteronomy further strengthen and define.

The larger canonical shape of the Torah substantiates the subversive idea of personal freedom within the covenant community. Canonically, Leviticus and Deuteronomy follow the Exodus codes. Tigay rightly notes that the overall structure of the Deuteronomic codes could easily indicate their dependence upon the codes like those found in Exodus.⁵⁹ A brief glance at the contrasts within the codes might serve to demonstrate this continuity.

In Deuteronomy, “your brother” seems to equal both male and female slaves. In Exodus, there is a clear distinction between the male slave, who is released on the seventh year of servitude, and the female slave, who was not released with the male servants. Exodus insures that the master must release the slave with no strings attached; “in the seventh he shall go out free, for nothing.” In Deuteronomy, the legislation is more elaborate for the master. The text insists that the owner “shall furnish him liberally out of your flock, out of your threshing floor, and out of your winepress.”⁶⁰

Both Exodus and Deuteronomy contain self-enslavement clauses within the instruction for manumission. The slave desires to stay in his current situation in Exodus because of his love for “his master, his wife, and his children.” The motive for the slave to stay with his master in Deuteronomy emerges from the relationship he has with his “master and his household” and the secure economic status the master provides for him. Tigay rightly notes that, while these pieces of legislation are different, they are not in conflict with one another.

Recognizing its place in the larger

pericope, one might tie the legislative motivation back to the prologue of the code itself (20:1). However, in Exodus 21 no immediate motive for the treatment of slaves appears. Within the Deuteronomic legislation, the motive clause is Israel’s history as slaves—a history that must generate both liberation (v. 18) and liberality (vv. 12-14).⁶¹ This idea occurs elsewhere in the comparison between Exodus and Deuteronomy. In the reshaping of the “ten words,” Deuteronomy makes Israel’s slave origin the motive for Sabbath keeping (Deut 5:15.). In Exodus the motive for keeping the Sabbath lies in the fact that the God of Israel’s liberation is the resting Creator of the world (Exod 20:8-11). Each piece of legislation finds its premise on a previous act of God. Furthermore, Exodus legislation stands deep in the shadow of the exodus-liberation, which was unprecedented in the ancient world, giving the writer of Exodus no cause for having to bring it to memory.

While an obvious connection between Exodus and Deuteronomy exists, scholars have long noted the seeming discontinuity with both books presented in Leviticus. Though both Exodus and Deuteronomy assume the ownership of the Hebrew slave, Leviticus seems to prohibit it. While the scope of this project does not include a full analysis of the Leviticus passage and its relationship to Exodus and Deuteronomy, a few points may be made in order to justify our canonical analysis.

The laws in Leviticus presuppose the existing laws in Exodus and supplement them.⁶² The following distinctions may be made between the Leviticus passage and the Exodus and Deuteronomy legislation. First, the individual is sold or sells himself⁶³ due to impoverishment. Second, as Schenker and Chirichigno suggest, this

individual is the *paterfamilias*.⁶⁴ Neither the Exodus nor Deuteronomic legislation mentions that the slave is married with children. The Leviticus code explicitly cites the man as both husband and father (25:41; cf. 54). Third, there is a distinct change in the time allotted for the slave. In both Exodus and Deuteronomy the slave serves six years and then he is freed along with his wife if he has one. The *paterfamilias*-slave serves until the year of Jubilee. Schenker has noted that the reason for this change is the amount of investment that the purchaser has to make to integrate an entire family into his household. This family could be quite large and, with respect to the Leviticus legislation, would be treated as servants not slaves. Thus, the investment the purchaser made was substantial and primarily for the *paterfamilias*-slave and his family, who have descended into destitution. Thus, the Leviticus code supplements the Exodus legislation by codifying the treatment of a *paterfamilias*-slave in the context of Jubilee.

Thus, the canonical placement of the manumission laws in Exod 21:2-11 demonstrates the propensity of Israel to identify themselves as free people. The ideal finds further substantiation and elaboration in Leviticus 25 and Deuteronomy 15. In the first passage, Moses strongly militates against enslavement of the *paterfamilias*. In the second, a legitimate expansion of the Exodus codes occurs that includes the release of the female slave along with the male upon entrance into the land, which is what their liberation naturally leads toward.⁶⁵ This Exodus liberation-paradigm occurs in the shadow of the great exodus-liberation from Egypt and the Sinai theophany, perhaps the two most explicit fear-inspiring events within the bounds of the Old Testament.

Exodus and the Modern Trade

Slavery, while illegal in every country still thrives as it did in ancient times but in a horrible new way. There are an estimated 44 million people enslaved today.⁶⁶ Tragic scenarios such as the Maddie McCann story remind us of the vicious nature of the modern trade. Such situations demand answers from Christians who take the biblical text seriously.

There are several points to keep in mind when considering the modern slave trade in light of the book of Exodus. First, Exodus, even with its critical affirmation of the institution of ancient slavery, does not support the current trade. The social architecture of the ANE is drastically different than our contemporary world. Our cultural architecture not only renders slavery unnecessary but also repulsive.

Second, and by extension, the architecture of slavery is altogether different today. While slavery was not the first choice for any ancient individual, it could be a better alternative than being destitute. By stark contrast, the current slave trade is not characterized by the humane disposition of Israel's perspective in Exodus. The Hebrew Scriptures preserve the preciousness of the human being and recognize their inherent dignity as image bearers of God. The current slave trade has no such perspective on slaves. The modern slave (who may be well below the age of thirteen years old and forcibly conscripted into any number of heinous acts) has no rights, is stripped of all dignity, and is bludgeoned consistently with the notion that he/she has absolutely no inherent worth. Furthermore, the notion of God, a fiercely just and passionately merciful God, is never an admitted aspect in the modern slave trade. Due to Israel's origins, these ideas were at the core of

both their existence and legislation. The slave owner in Israel rooted his identity in the reality of liberation from slavery, and, therefore, could not correctly perceive a slave in an impersonal manner. They were to be treated with a certain measure of empathy. The modern trade knows no empathy. It is driven by economic brutality and often fueled by raw perversion. There is no sympathetic disposition or personal identity between owner/pimp and slave. The slave amounts to a tradable commodity and nothing more, certainly not human, certainly not as precious image bearers of the one true living God, who redeems and delivers into the land of promise.

Third, given this new architecture for slavery coupled with the lack of abolitionism in the Old Testament, the spirit of the text still presses one toward a modern abolitionist stance. The covenant subversion within Israel's legislation and literature provides the paradigm. Exodus legislation speaks to the value of the person, of the image bearer of God. It contends clearly for the preciousness of human life. Further, with no *status quo* cultural sense of slavery for the impoverished, the modern adherents to Exodus theology should also seek to elevate the status of people within the grip of the modern trade.

Fourth, the legislation in Exodus is written directly to the covenant people concerning their interaction among themselves. Thus, the covenant people who freely reside in America must take seriously the plight of their persecuted brothers and sisters in hostile and restricted nations such as China. Exodus displays them in the context of our redemption, understanding them as precious and valuable, and insists upon their freedom.

Fifth, Exodus displays to the contempo-

rary reader what real freedom is, namely the natural results of the supernatural liberating work of God. Christians must look into a privatized perverse system and speak the truth of the gospel to those in its grip who may never be freed from it. There is freedom even in chains and hope in the midst of hopelessness. No pervert or slave owner can abduct those who are genuinely free. While being a slave to an individual is bitter, it does not match the bitter illusion that master sin imposes upon his victims. While freedom from an owner is sweet and must be demanded in the current trade, freedom from sin and to Christ is sweeter still and must be even more vigorously pursued by covenant people.

ENDNOTE

¹C. J. H. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004), 334. Much of my thinking has been shaped by Wright.

²The notion of covenant-subversion is that Israel's subversive disposition toward their surrounding culture is created, shaped, and driven by the covenant relationship with Yahweh.

³The LXX employs δουλεύω as its primary term for "be a slave/servant."

⁴According to Claus Westermann ("עבד," in *Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament* [3 vols.; ed. Claus Westerman; trans. Mark E. Biddle; Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 1997], 2:183), the verb appears in Hebrew 289 times and in Aramaic twenty-eight times. It pervasively occurs in the qal stem (271 times). Of the remaining forms, it occurs in the niph'al 4 times, the pu'al 2 times, the hiph'il 8 times, and the hoph'al 4 times.

⁵E. Carpenter, "עבד," in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* (5 vols.; ed. Willem A. VanGe-

meren; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 5:306. Aside from its 800 appearances in Hebrew, it also occurs seven times in Aramaic.

⁶See all the pertinent studies: Westermann “עֶבֶד,” 2:182-200; Helmer Ringgren, “עֶבֶד,” *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (15 vols; ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz Josef Fabry; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 10:376-405; and Werner Foerster, “*doulos*,” *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (10 vols.; ed. Gerhard Kittel; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 2:265-283.

⁷Ringgren, “עֶבֶד,” 10:376.

⁸The English term “slave” appears approximately 70 times in the ESV. The vast majority of those times, the translators are translating the word עֶבֶד. Other terms used by the biblical writers are as follows: חֶסֶד (Deut 21:14), שִׁפְחָה (Lev 19:20; Eccl 2:7; Isa 14:2; Jer 34:11, 16), בֶּן בֵּית (Eccl 2:7), and נִס (Lam 1:1).

⁹Lev 25:38.

¹⁰Cf also Jer 34:11 and 16 for correspondence between לִשְׁפָחָה and לְעֶבֶד.

¹¹The context of the promise to Abraham (Gen 15:13) emphasizes the acquisition of the land after 400 years of afflicted sojourning (landlessness).

¹²See Brevard Childs, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1974), 14 for this conclusion.

¹³Childs comments that this particular law was bound to fail in Israel given the nature of marriage in Gen 2:24 and Matt 19:6 (ibid., 468).

¹⁴Ibid., 468-469.

¹⁵I will address this passage further below in conjunction with its parallels in Leviticus and Deuteronomy.

¹⁶Ibid., 473.

¹⁷A. Gardiner, “The Geography of the Exodus,” in *Recueil d'études égyptologiques dédiées: la mémoire Jean-François Champollion* (Paris: bibliothèque de l'école des hautes études, 1922), 204-205. Cited in James Karl Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt: The Evidence for the Authenticity of the Exodus Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1997), 112. It should be noted that Historical Minimalists such as Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman (*David and Solomon: In Search of the Bible's Sacred Kings and the Roots of the Western Tradition* [New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006]), T. L. Thompson (*Early History of the Israelite People: From the Written and Archaeological Sources* [Leiden: Brill, 1992]), and P. R. Davies (*In Search of “Ancient Israel”* [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1992]) would certainly disagree with these assertions. Davies summarizes that historical Israel exists only in archaeological remains, that biblical Israel exists only in Scripture, and that “ancient Israel” exists only as an unacceptable amalgam of the first two.

¹⁸William J. Murnane, *The Penguin Guide to Ancient Egypt* (London: Penguin, 1983), 37.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰There was also a ubiquitous understanding of the necessity of straw for legitimate brickmaking

²¹W. M. Flinders Petrie, *Social Life in Ancient Egypt* (London: Constable

and Company, 1923), 23; See also Abd-el-Moshen, *Slavery in Pharaonic Egypt* (Supplement aux Annales Du Service de Antiquities de l' Egypte 18; Paris: L'Organisztion Egypteane Generale du Livre, 1952; repr. 1978), 4, 7, 124.

²²Ibid., 56, This new policy was probably generated by the long awaited expulsion of the Hyksos. See also Abd-el-Moshen, *Slavery in Pharaonic Egypt*, 81; Allan Gardiner, “A Lawsuit Arising from the Purchase of Two Slaves,” *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 21 (1935): 140-46.

²³Kenneth Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 247.

²⁴According to Kitchen, the label of the inscription reads as follows: “captures brought-off by his majesty for wok at the Temple of [Amun].” He notes that the official publication of the tomb chapel scene appears in N. de G. Davies, *The Tomb of Rekhmire at Thebes I, II* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of arts, 1943; repr., Arno, 1973), 54-60, 58-60.

²⁵See Exod 1:11-14; 5:1-21.

²⁶Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, 248 notes that the Louvre leather scroll records that in Year 5 of Ramses II the “stablemasters” established a quota of 2,000 bricks to be made under them. For the biblical corollary, see Exod 5:8, 13-14, 18-19.

²⁷Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, 248. See the mention of straw-based bricks in Exod 5:7, 18.

²⁸On the identification of the ‘*apiru*, see M. G. Kline, “Hebrews,” in the *New Bible Dictionary* (ed. I. Howard Marshall, A. R. Millard, J. I Packer,

and D. J. Wiseman; 3d ed; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1996), 457-58; N. P. Lemche, "Habiru, Hapiru" and "Hebrew" in *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (6 vols.; ed. David Noel Freedman; (New York: Doubleday, 1992) 3:6-10, 95.

²⁹Kitchen (*On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, 249) cites further accounts of Ramses II demanding slaves be brought from as far south as Lybia: "South, west, or northeast in his realm, this pharaoh was prepared to conscript foreigners mercilessly if need be."

³⁰Cf. Exod 5:10-21.

³¹See Kitchen, *On The Reliability of the Old Testament*, 248. Kitchen provides primary sources on 553 n. 10.

³²See David Clines, *The Theme of the Pentateuch* (JSOT Supplement Series 10; Sheffield: University of Sheffield, 1978).

³³Gordon Wenham, *Genesis* (Word Biblical Commentary; Nashville: Nelson, 1987), 331. See the clear connection with divine activity and the above imagery in Exodus (Exod 10:21, 22; 14:20; 15:16; 23:27).

³⁴Childs (*Exodus*, 12) notes that the same tension in the Joseph narrative exists here, namely, the outworking of God's good will for His people versus the evil schemes of the new Pharaoh.

³⁵John Durham, *Exodus* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1987), 7.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷As cited in Wright, *Old Testament Ethics*, 337.

³⁸Muhammed A Dandamayev, "Slavery," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6:58-59. There were three main social segments: freemen, slaves, semi-

free populace. Within this construct existed three main types of labor: independent labor of free peasants or craftsmen, slave labor, and labor from various semi-free groups.

³⁹Martha T. Roth, *Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor* (2d ed.; SBL Writings from the Ancient World Series; Atlanta: Scholars, 1997), 65.

⁴⁰Ibid., 82.

⁴¹Ibid., 122: "If an *awilu's* slave should strike the cheek of a member of the *awilu* class, they shall cut off his ear" (LH ¶205).

⁴²Apparently a removable mark placed on the shaved head of a slave in Babylon.

⁴³The plain meaning of this verb is that the guilty party is liable to death themselves *via* the legal community. Thus, in this case the master was to be charged on behalf of the slave, who had no family. The other option is that the owner is to be avenged for killing his own slave, which makes no more sense than the proverbial man who begs the court for mercy due to the fact that he is an orphan after killing his parents.

⁴⁴Wright, *Old Testament Ethics*, 335.

⁴⁵See S. S. Bartchy, "Slavery," in *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (4 vols.; ed. Geoffrey Bromiley; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 4:541 for a more detailed discussion.

⁴⁶See Isaac Mendelsohn, *Slavery in the Ancient Near East: A Comparative Study of Slavery in Babylonia, Assyria, and Palestine, from the Third Millennium to the End of the First Millennium* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1949), 117-55 for a full discussion.

⁴⁷Gen 17:23; Eccl 2:7; Hos 3:2 respectively.

⁴⁸Cf. 2 Peter 2:1.

⁴⁹Roth, *Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor*, 67.

⁵⁰Ibid., 84.

⁵¹Ibid, 70. Roth claims that the possible meaning of this text is that the guilty party in whose possession the slave is found shall return the slave and in addition provide another of equal value.

⁵²Deut 23:15-16.

⁵³It should be noted that scholars dispute the idea of the slave's identity in this text. Some assert that this only has the foreigner running to Israel in mind. Others state that the slave can be either. Context would suggest the latter, which would include Israelite slaves running from vicious masters. This idea is clearly the background for Paul's discussion concerning Onesimus and his owner in the book of Philemon.

⁵⁴Dandamayev, "Slavery," 6:61.

⁵⁵G. R. Driver and J. Miles, *The Babylonian Laws: 1. Legal Commentary* (2 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon University, 1968), 1:221-230. For a detailed discussion concerning manumission see Dandamayev, "Slavery," 6:59-73; Mendelsohn, *Slavery in the Ancient Near East*.

⁵⁶Deuteronomy elaborates upon this law and adds the female slaves along with male slaves for the seven year release, and Leviticus seems hostile to the idea of owning Israelite slaves altogether. See below the comparison of the three Torah manumission laws.

⁵⁷A. Phillips, "The Laws of Slavery:

Exodus 21:2-11," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 30 (1984): 62.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Jeffrey Tigay, *Deuteronomy: The JPS Torah Commentary* (Philadelphia: Jerusalem Publication Society, 1966), 466.

⁶⁰Phillips, "The Laws of Slavery," 54; N. P. Lemche ("The Hebrew Slave: Comments on the Slave Law of Exodus XXI 2-11," *Vetus Testamentum* 25 [1975]: 137) notes the expansion of the legislation.

⁶¹Phillips ("Slave Law") notes that the Exodus is not cited in Deuteronomy. A fair question would be, "Does it have to be cited?" It would be the elephant in the room in a slave legislation discussion. Based upon the Sabbath law comparison, Exodus theology finds its impetus in creation theology. Following the hermeneutic of Exodus 15 (from land to land), Deuteronomic theology is rightly rooted in the precedent set in Exodus.

⁶²For a thorough discussion on the canonical shape of Leviticus 25 as both presupposing the laws of Exodus and preceding the laws of Deuteronomy, see S. Japhet, "The Relationship between the Legal Corpora in the Pentateuch in Light of Manumission Laws," in *Studies in the Bible* (Scripta Hierosolymitana, 31; ed. S. Japhet; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1986), 63-89; G. C. Chirichigno (*Debt-Slavery in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, [JSOTSupp, 141; Sheffield: JSOT, 1993], 342-43) asserts that the three manumission laws in Exod 21:2-6; Lev 25:39-53; and Deut 15:12-18 are properly shaped in the final form of the canon (Exodus precedes

Leviticus, and Leviticus precedes Deuteronomy) and express a coherent system of debt-slavery that differentiates the release of debt-slaves according to the severity of their debt. See A. Schenker, "The Biblical Legislation on the Release of Slaves: The Road from Exodus to Leviticus," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 78 (1998): 23-41, for a detailed discussion of Chirichigno's arguments.

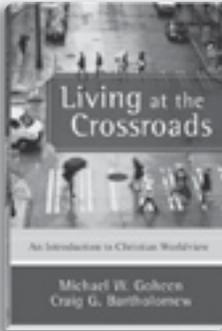
⁶³See A. Schenker ("The Biblical Legislation of the Release of Slaves," 23-41) for the discussion on the term *mkr* as a niph'al reflexive or passive.

⁶⁴Schenker, "The Release of Slaves," 27; G.C. Chirichigno, *Debt-Slavery in Israel*, 335-36.

⁶⁵The most obvious textual testimony to this idea in Exodus is chapter 15, where the reader encounters the redemption song of Israel that treats the redemptive work of God in two phases. First, he has "thrown the horse and rider into the sea" overthrowing Pharaoh in holy war. Second, he delivers Israel into the good land.

⁶⁶www.freetheslaves.com.

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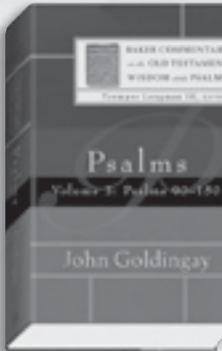
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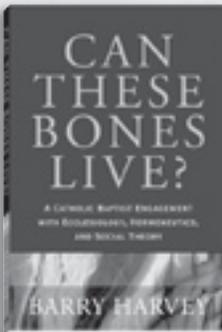
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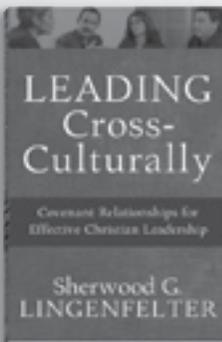
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