Michael Welker (Ed.)

Quests for Freedom

Biblical – Historical – Contemporary

neukirchener theologie



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Heidelberg, Spring 2014 Michael Welker

Introduction

Concepts and Practices of Freedom in the Biblical Traditions and in Contemporary Contexts

Michael Welker

In his contribution "What it is to be Free," the philosopher Rüdiger Bittner argues that freedom is marked by a degree, by a caliber. "Your freedom is nothing but your world's unhostility" – and our world can be more or less hostile or unhostile towards us. He warns against "high-minded statements both of individual and political freedom." We should rather ask where we are "held back, where we are oppressed, and what to do about it," where we can avoid, circumvent or overcome barriers. Thus, we should understand freedom as "a direction of some of our endeavors." With this proposal, Bittner's proposal fits in with those contributions that have suggested focusing our attention on "concepts of freedom" with a concentration on "practices and contexts of freedom."

I.

Several of the chapters presented deal with the topic of freedom as liberation from slavery, mainly in the biblical traditions, but with perspectives on contemporary contexts (Manfred Oeming and Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza); in one case a whole people is concerned (OT), in the other case one of the weakest groups in society, the female slaves (NT). Ron Sodalter and Katharina von Kellenbach explore exemplary contemporary situations of slavery and oppression.

In the following parts several chapters consider political and legal attempts to identify directions in which not only individual but also communal endeavors work against existing or potential limitations and barriers or try to prevent the establishment of barriers that hinder or limit individuals and communities "to do this or that." They focus on the ancient Greek notions of the freedom of speech in the assembly (*parrhesia*), the equal right to speak publicly (*isegoria*), equality before the law (*isonomia*) and the equality of polis leadership (*isokratia*) as

elements of the ability of individuals or groups in the society to govern themselves (*eleutheria*) (Jan Gertz, Jürgen van Oorschot, Larry Hurtado, Peter Lampe).

II.

Important attempts to transcend the oligarchic limitations of these strivings are explored in the Old Testaments traditions: The remembrance of the successful emancipation and liberation of the people from foreign oppression and from captivity becomes the basis for a pathos of release and emancipation from foreign rulership in general (Patrick Miller). Various attempts to limit the situation of individual slavery on the one hand and the introduction of a neighborhood ethos, a fraternal ethos and even an ethos of love on the other aim at the establishment of morals that support mutual respect and care. Some contributions also reflect on religious attempts to limit political power over individuals, groups or a whole society by understanding and respecting God as the source and guarantee of freedom (Jürgen van Oorschot, Jan Gertz, Beverly Gaventa, Hans-Joachim Eckstein and others).

This religious claim tries to relativize the barriers between social classes, even between the king and the (full) citizens. It can go hand in hand with an ambivalent rhetoric of "slavery" with respect to the human relation to God (Jan Gertz, Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza, Hans-Joachim Eckstein), but also with "covenantal" reflections that see God in a perspective of kenosis and partnership. Religious thought also tries to deal with the topic of individual and communal self-jeopardizing, which even uses religious, legal and moral means (sin). It even tries to deal with the barriers erected by powers such as death, which seem to set ultimate limits to freedom (Patrick Miller, Jan Gertz, Hans-Joachim Eckstein, Beverly Gaventa).

III.

Several chapters show that some of the aspects and directions mentioned above are more or less dominant or weakened in specific biblical contexts and traditions, depending on situations and contexts. With regard to the topic of slavery these tendencies were partly criticized and partly justified as strategies to stimulate emergent processes of transformation (Elisabeth Schuessler Fiorenza, Larry Hurtado, Hans-Joachim Eckstein). Several contributions explore biblical attempts to develop exemplary patterns of thought, behavior and action that enhance the sensitivity toward typical forms of mutual hindrance,

impediment and subordination. These prohibitive and defensive strategies can move towards (or can be generated by) the development of forms of mutual honoring and care that enhance the other person's freedom. The interest in the development of these patterns of thought and behavior is characteristic of many biblical traditions and contexts. Paul can connect an ethos of creative self-limitation in favor of others with the recommendation "to become slave to one another through love" (Gal 5:13). Several biblical traditions correlate these ethical patterns with an appreciation of attempts to understand and respect the freedom of God (in doxology) as a source of human freedom (Beverly Gaventa).

Over against these observations, a warning against texts centered on a male elite with an imperial rhetoric of enslavement to God brought the challenge to discern imperial rhetoric or anti-imperial discourse in the Pauline corpus. In what forms and under which conditions do religious strategies to support emergent transformations of social and moral traditions tend to serve appeasement and camouflage (Elisabeth Schuessler-Fiorenza) and turn into sterile forms of mere moral appeal?

IV.

Another tradition of thought, introduced with respect to Patristic texts, centers on the differentiation of freedom as *autexousia*, as self-control, "innate to all human beings," and as *eleutheria*, the search for and the ability to enjoy beatitude (Cyril Hovorun). Both dimensions are seen in the "inner realm" of the human person. This stimulates challenges to differentiate and, in the line with Reformation thought, to relate "natural capacity" and "spiritual dignity" (Risto Saarinen) and directs attention to the potentials of "free will" and the individual moral and religious experience.

Several chapters indicate that the anthropological discourse correlated with these interests should on the one hand not lose the differentiated field of experience and insight described above and on the other hand should rise to the challenge of contemporary scientific anthropological research (Friederike Nüssel). Reformation thought anticipates modern ideas such as "freedom as a matter of individual fulfillment in individual identity and distinctiveness" versus "individual and communal fulfillment in the context of communal fulfillment and sacrifice" or in "changing political and economic conditions of life and institutions" (Dirk Smit). This leads to the questions how Christian symbols, rhetoric and practices have been able to shape and will continue to shape a multidimensional "ethos of belonging" (Dirk Smit), an "ethos of commitment" (Carver Yu) or an "ethos of tolerance" (Jindrich

Halama), a tolerance that leaves room for the appreciation of radically different types of Christianity and different religious and moral traditions.

V.

These directions of thought can be correlated with the question of how dominant religious traditions such as Roman Catholicism are able to relate today to human rights ethics and policies and a cosmopolitanism that tries to mobilize against political and religious "imbalances" in the name of freedom (Francis Fiorenza, Susan Abraham). Of interest is the compatibility of religious thought with legal and political evolutions that we connect with the notion of freedom. Legal and political dynamics are expected to work against a mere rhetoric of moral appeals and Sunday speech declarations. In the opposite direction, how and on what basis can insights of the biblical traditions illuminate and overcome shortcomings in political and moral visions of leading contemporary voices (Michael Welker)? Can we make the "Spirit" plausible as a religious and cultural reality and as a measure of freedom?

1.

FREEDOM AND DOMINATION

Introduction

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza

According to the World English Dictionary, freedom is defined as "personal liberty, as freedom from slavery, bondage serfdom etc., as liberation or deliverance, as freedom from confinement and bondage, as the quality or state of being free, esp. to enjoy political and civil liberties."[1] Freedom entails self-determination, choice, independence, autonomy, liberty or lack of restrictions. Freedom entails the absence of poverty, starvation, disease and oppression. To be free means *not to be a slave wo/man*. This first section of the book opens *Quests for Freedom* with the intention of contextualizing its reflections on freedom with respect to the reality of slavery.

In 1791, when the Bill of Rights was adopted but thousands of Africans continued to live in slavery, a free African American by the name of Benjamin Banneker wrote to Thomas Jefferson.[2] Banneker appeals to the idea that G*d created all equal, an idea that tied together religious faith and political liberty in a democracy:

> That one universal Father hath given being to us all, and that he has not only made us all of one flesh, but that he hath also, without partiality,

1 Collins English Dictionary, Complete & Unabridged; 10th Edition (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2009).

2 Copy of a letter from Benjamin Banneker to the secretary of state with his answer, Electronic Text Center, University of Virginia Library.

> ….endowed us all with the same faculties, and that however variable we may be in society or religion, however diversified in situation of color, we all are the same family and stand in relation to him.

He reminds Jefferson of the time when the British crown sought to curtail the freedom of their colony, the time when Jefferson clearly saw "the injustice of a state of slavery" and "the horrors of its condition" and "publicly held forth this true and invaluable doctrine":

> We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, and that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

However, Banneker also points out that Jefferson has not acted upon these words but has continued the inhuman practices of slavery despite his proclamation of the unalienable rights of liberty, happiness and justice for all:

> But, Sir, how pitiable it is to reflect, that although you were so fully convinced of the benevolence of the Father of Mankind, and of his equal and impartial distribution of these rights and privileges, which he has conferred upon them, that you should at the same time counteract his mercies, in detaining by fraud and violence so numerous a part of my brethren, under groaning captivity and cruel oppression, that you should at the same time to be found guilty of that most criminal act, which you professedly detested in others, with respect to yourselves.

However, this contradiction is not peculiar to Jefferson. It has its roots in Athenian democracy, in Christian Scriptures and theological traditions, and it is still characterizing our own times when freedom is proclaimed for a few while there are more slaves on the planet as at any other time in human history.[3] On June 27, 2011, the US State Department released its Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report, an annual ranking of how well -- or how badly -- countries around the world are doing to fight modern forms of slavery. Yet, slavery remains one of the most invisible reality. The report is a sobering litany of horrific abuses and the faltering efforts of many governments to stop these crimes. Being forced into domestic servitude is one of the most common forms of human trafficking. Hence, any theological reflection on freedom needs to take into account this historical and contemporary context of slavery and servitude. Any intellectual and theological discussion of freedom that spiritualizes freedom in the face of slavery or restricts freedom to a few by denying the equality of all contributes ideologically to this global situation of enslavement.

3 See E. Benjamin Skinner, "A World Enslaved," Foreign Policy March/April 2008. See also Bernadette Brooten, ed., *Beyond Slavery. Overcoming Its Religious and Sexual Legacies*, New York: Palgrave , 2010

Hannah Arendt traces the origins of the concept of freedom to the ancient Greek *polis,* the Greek-City-State, from which our word politics derives. Politics could only be practiced by those elite gentlemen, the *kyrioi*, who had freed themselves from the necessities of life. It rests on the distinction between the *household*, the realm of necessity, and the public space of the *polis* where free men discovered who they were and established their individuality with the assistance of others. In contrast to the household, which was given over to necessity and economics, the politics was the realm of freedom.[4]

However, Arendt does not spell out that the individuals who could engage in the political realm were only freeborn propertied male citizens, the *kyrioi*, whereas the household as the realm of necessity was the domain of freeborn and slave wo/men.[5] To lift this into consciousness, I have coined the term *kyriarchy* to characterize such a system of domination. *Kyriarchy* is derived from Greek *kyrios (Latin dominus)* – the lord, slave master, father, husband, propertied free male to whom all the members of the household were subordinated and by whom they were controlled – and the Greek verb *archein* – to rule, dominate, control. The household as the realm of necessity was also the realm of domination. Freedom in this classical and western political sense was the property of freeborn propertied men only. It was the *kyrios/dominus* who was the free citizen. Western democracy has been built on the subordination and enslavement of the subordinated members of household and state. The perspective of slave wo/men on freedom has not been transmitted but it rings through the centuries claiming freedom and wellbeing for all without exceptions.

Utilizing this concept of democratic kyriarchy for elaborating Paul's understanding of freedom, Rick F. Talbott has introduced the notion of *kyridoularchy*, which is a composite of 3 terms: *kyrios*, *doulos* (slave) and *archein*. According to Talbott, kyridoularchy was a central strategy of Paul that:

> required power to be used to empower or honor those with less status in his communities. In this case, power remained a strategy towards community solidarity and cohesion aligned with Paul's ideology.[6]

However, Paul's ideology and strategy remained kyriarchal and therefore bifurcated. Hence, Talbott concludes that Paul's strategy was to control his communities through the rhetoric of kyridoularchy:

4 Hannah Arendt, "What is Freedom?," *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: Penguin, 1993).

5 See Page duBois, *Slaves and Other Objects* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003).

6 Rick F. Talbott, *Jesus, Paul and Power: Rhetoric, Ritual and Metaphor in Ancient Mediterranean Christianity* (Eugene, Or.: Cascade Books, 2010) p. 93, n.1.

> To justify Paul's use (of) power because it served to empower others….obscures the central and complex role power played (Rom 15:1-3; 1 Cor 12:7; Phil 2:1-7). *Kyridoularchy* was an idealized model for Paul that he required others to imitate….But again, Paul's demand for such obedient submission to kyridoularchy was ironically a form of kyriarchy. [7]

Whereas according to Hannah Arendt, in the 5th century the concept of freedom became associated with the Christian notion of inner freedom and the freedom of the will, Talbott (among others) locates the beginning of this development in Paul's writings. Since it is impossible to trace here the Christian history of this bifurcation of freedom, I will just mention one incident that has become crucial in the framing of the discussion of freedom in Christian modernity.

The *Twelve Articles of the Peasant Revolt* were formulated on March 6, 1525 by a representative of the Upper Swabian Peasant League in the German Peasant's war. Article 3 states: "Christ freed us from all bondage… According to the Scriptures we are free people and we wish to be free."[8] The peasants asked for the abolition of feudal bondage, which they argued was against the gospel of freedom. Both Luther and Melanchthon objected that the serf can participate in inner freedom. Equality does not exist in the profane realm but only in the spiritual realm where the distinction between Lord and serf is abolished.[9] Christian freedom is inner freedom and means to no longer be subjected to the power of sin. Such an understanding of freedom legitimated the enslavement of whole continents through colonialism and still today enables the practices of slavery.

With "A Blight on the Nation: Slavery in Today's America," Ron Soodalter opens this section on slavery and freedom. He details how slavery is at work not only in the USA but across the globe, traces the history of slavery in order to contextualize *human trafficking* in an unbroken legacy of bondage, elaborates "equal opportunity slavery," and details how modern day slavery has become a big business that touches all of our lives in different ways. Soodalter concludes:

> Slavery is legal nowhere in the world, and yet it is practiced everywhere. It is estimated that approximately 27 million people are in bondage worldwide. (p. 21)

7 Talbott, ibid., p. 109.

8 Jean Carpentier, H. Huinke, R. Minerath, W. Schmale, J.Zaryn, *The Emergence of Human Rights in Europe: An Anthology* (Council of Europe, 2001) p. 61. The original text of the Twelve Articles in German by the city of Memmingen: http://stadtarchiv.memmingen.de/918.html.

9 Martin Brecht, "Die Menschenrechte in der Geschichte der Kirche," in Jörg Bauer, *Zum Thema Menschenrechte* (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1977) 54-55.

In "To be a Free Nation in Our Land," Manfred Oeming in turn discusses the myth, ritual and ethics of freedom in the Hebrew Bible, or the Christian Old Testament. The myth of freedom tells the story of the transformation of an enslaved people to a free nation. The story of the Exodus is one of the foundational myths of the people of Israel. The rituals of freedom are the Sabbath, circumcision, and especially Passover. Thus the whole Jewish liturgical calendar celebrates Jewish liberation from bondage into freedom.

Oeming's elaboration of the "Ethics of Freedom" discusses first the legal status of slaves, to which many passages allude but do not clearly spell out, reviews the value and work of slaves, and compares Israelite slaveholding with that of the Near East. In the final section, Oeming discusses 3 narratives of liberation: Neh 5, Jer 34 and 2 Chr 28 – three texts that illustrate his conclusion:

> The biblical traditions are telling a long story of liberation of Israel - yet the texts hardly talk about the rights of slaves and don't develop a ongoing religious pressure to release them. In legal writings and in daily live, biblical Israel's ethics often fell way behind its mythic narratives. Measured by its own criteria, Israel was living in a sinful state. (p.48)

Oeming's elaboration makes it clear that Scriptural and the*logical discourses on freedom call for a hermeneutics of suspicion and an ethics of interpretation in the face of the sufferings of slavery. My own contribution, "Slave Wo/men and Freedom in the Pauline Tradition" discusses the methodological shifts necessary to understand freedom both in the ancient and in the contemporary contexts of slavery. The paper seeks to shift the focus of our attention from Paul's kyridoularchal understanding of freedom (which is elaborated in the articles of the 3rd section) to an understanding of freedom in Christ, i.e. the messianic corporation, which inspired the struggles of slave wo/men for freedom.

Whereas the genuine Pauline letters are unclear with respect to slavery, the so-called post-Pauline letters argue for an acceptance of slavery. While in the Pauline letters freedom seems to be understood as belonging to all the members of the ekklēsia, the Post-Pauline household codes clearly articulate rules of subordination for those who remain caught up in the realm of necessity, the household. These injunctions to accept slavery must not only be seen in the context of the discourses and practices of manumission in Roman antiquity, but they must also be understood to sustain a slave mentality of subordination. An ethics of interpretation recognizes the ongoing power of the Scriptural language of freedom to shape our socio-political symbolic universes and religious-theological capabilities for imagining and advocating a different world free of slavery and domination.

Finally, in "The Paradox of Freedom," Katharina von Kellenbach discusses the ethos of submission transmitted through the household code texts, but focuses on wo/men and heterosexual marriage rather than on slavery. She seeks to challenge "theological discourses that ground freedom in submission and obedience," and points out that in the U.S. "the rallying cry for Christian freedom has become a potent weapon in the battle to curtail women's control over conception and childbearing."

After critically discussing the Protestant theological reception of Paul's message as "the paradox of freedom," she turns to the *Manhattan Declaration* and its political arguments, which call on Christians to engage in "civil disobedience" in order to defend "the sanctity of human life" and the "dignity" of heterosexual marriage. These discourses assert that

> the family can never be a democracy of free equals but must remain a sacred hierarchy, in which women (and children) are to submit, by divine design and degree, to male authority. This inherently contradictory position among Christian proponents of liberty, democracy and equality is reconciled by dressing it up as "paradox" and by advertising it as in the best interest of women. (p. 83)

In the second half of her paper, von Kellenbach explores the "paradox of freedom" in and through a careful reading of the annunciation story in Luke. Mary is seen as an "exemplar of obedience" and has been used to inculcate the subjugation of women. Von Kellenbach seeks to understand her as "talking back" to the angel and as acting to assure her own safety and that of her child. Mary becomes the paradigm of "freedom understood as response-ability to God."

Von Kellenbach concludes:

> The religious and political impulse to force a woman into submission in order to endure a pregnancy against her will and better judgment serves no discernible moral or theological value. The desire to curtail women's ability to respond is inherently abusive and will not lead to the kind of freedom that has traditionally been expressed as obedience and submission to the will of God. (p. 93)

In sum, the contributions of this section explore the implications and ideological effects of Scriptural and the*logical discourses on freedom in a world still characterized by the ongoing brutality of slavery. They reject the pacifying notion of "inner freedom" and the ethics of submission as sin and as the ideological legitimization of unfreedom. Threy sereby seek to ground our theoretical and practical reflections on freedom in the brutal reality of slavery and sex-trafficking.

1.1
A Blight On The Nation
Slavery In Today's America

Ron Soodalter

For two years, twelve Mexican and Guatemalan field workers in South Florida were enslaved by the Navarretes, a family of traffickers. The family beat them, chained them to a pole, and at night, locked them in boxes and truck trailers, with little food and no plumbing, while keeping them in ever-increasing debt. During the day, they were taken to work in the tomato fields of two of the state's biggest growers – six Ls and Pacific. When their day's work was done, they were taken back to their prison. Finally, one of the workers pounded a hole through the trailer and crawled out; he got a ladder, and helped the others to escape. The Navarretes were arrested and indicted on trafficking charges. They pled guilty, were sentenced to jail, and ordered to pay their victims $240,000 in restitution. Officials at Six Ls and Pacific could not be reached for comment. Assistant U.S. Attorney Doug Molloy called it one of Southwest Florida's "ugliest slavery cases ever," and added, "We have a number of similar – and ongoing – investigations." And yet, despite the successful prosecution of seven slavery cases involving over 1,000 workers, and despite pressure from such organizations as Amnesty International USA, until recently, Governor Crist refused to acknowledge the presence of slavery in Florida's fields.

An American humorist named Will Rogers once said, "It's not that we're so dumb, it's just that what we know ain't so."

Certain things Americans know to be true. We know that the South kept slaves, and the North fought a righteous war of liberation. We know that the slave trade was legal until the Civil War. We know that the Emancipation Proclamation freed all the slaves, and that the United States has been slavery-free ever since. These things we know – and none of it is true.

On the other hand, most Americans do *not* know that slavery not only exists throughout the world today; it flourishes. Slavery is legal nowhere in the world, and yet it is practiced everywhere. It is estimated that approximately 27 million people are in bondage worldwide; that's

more than twice as many people as were taken in chains during the entire 350 years of the African Slave Trade. Human trafficking is one of the most profitable criminal enterprises of our time, along with drugs and guns, and is responsible for tens of billions of dollars in revenues worldwide. You might point to all those backward emerging nations – what we used to call "Third World" countries - and you'd be partly right. But it's also such "civilized" countries as England, France, Spain, Italy, Israel, Scotland, Ireland, Greece, Sweden, Denmark, Japan, and China. I have been invited here to Düsseldorf, to discuss the concept and reality of modern-day slavery. Yet, even as I speak, instances of human trafficking are occurring right here in Germany. According to the U.S. State Department Trafficking in Persons Report,

> Germany is a transit and destination country for men and women trafficked for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor. Victims were trafficked to Germany from other parts of Europe, Africa (primarily Nigeria), Asia, and the Western Hemisphere. Approximately one-quarter of sex trafficking victims were German nationals trafficked within the country.
>
> Twelve percent of trafficking victims were younger than 18 years old. The majority of identified sex trafficking victims were exploited in bars and brothels. Reported incidents of forced labor occurred mainly in restaurants, catering, and the domestic work and agriculture sectors.
>
> *- U.S. State Dept Trafficking in Persons Report, June, 2009*

The record of successful prosecutions in Germany has declined from 193 in 2006, to 168 in 2007 – the most recent year for which data is available in the face of our research. A number of these convictions have resulted in suspended sentences for the convicted traffickers.

Most Americans express relatively little surprise when made aware of trafficking abroad. They are, however, shocked to discover that modern-day slavery is occurring in the United States. Most Americans do *not* know that slavery is alive and more than well in our own country, thriving in the dark, and practiced in many forms in places you'd least expect.

The simple truth is, humans keep slaves; we always have. Historically, we Americans see ourselves as the world's foremost messengers and practitioners of personal freedom. And yet, there has always been bondage in our land. Always. There has never been a single day without slavery on the North American continent, from its European discovery right up to the present moment.

An Unbroken Legacy of Bondage

In 1493, on his second voyage across the Atlantic, and before even establishing a colony, Christopher Columbus enslaved hundreds of

Taino Indians, and shipped them home to Spain. The wave of armed and armored conquistadores that followed brought a plague of butchery and enslavement upon the Indians that destroyed entire cultures. With the age-old rationale that any foreign society is inferior to one's own, the Spaniards, in their quest for treasure, used the "God-told-me-to-do-it" argument to justify a policy of rape, slaughter and enslavement. They called it, "la guerra de sangre y fuego" – the war of blood and fire; sometimes they simply called it, "pacification."

And when the Spaniards found that the Indians were dying in droves from brutality and European diseases, their king gave his consent to sail to *Africa* for slaves – "bozales," as they were called - beginning what would become the three-and-a-half century-long trans-Atlantic trade. Ultimately, every European power claiming land in the New World followed Spain's example. French, Dutch, Portuguese and English settlers from Canada to the bottom tip of South America owned slaves. Slave labor became an accepted social and economic reality.

It's a safe bet that the majority of Americans believe the curse of slavery ended with the Civil War and the laws that presumably banished it forever from our shores; nothing could be further from the truth. It continued more quietly and on a smaller scale, but without pause. While legal emancipation might have come with the 13th Amendment, that didn't stop the southern planters from *re*-enslaving countless thousands of African-Americans. Crops in the South still needed planting, cultivating and harvesting, and there was a vast population of unemployed former slaves. Planters instituted a system that was as close to the old slavery as possible, but with some new wrinkles.

This time, it was called "peonage," and it was simply a form of debt bondage slavery. Thousands of Blacks – and poor Whites - were duped or coerced into signing contracts as field workers or sharecroppers. Farm owners would hold their pay, and the workers were often obligated to make all their purchases from the "company store," using tickets rather than money. When their annual contracts expired, they found that the crops they raised never paid the debts they owed. Although these "debts" were often fraudulent or impossibly inflated, the penalty for non-payment was jail or worse. The law was on the planters' side. The only alternative was to stay on the land and try to work off the debt, which never seemed to lessen or disappear. Worst of all, the debt passed from parent to child, binding families to the land with no hope of advancement or escape. Each year became a frustrating, spirit-crushing effort to break even. Peonage was practiced across the South and upheld for decades by local and national government. A full federal ban on peonage slavery was not passed until *1948*, and still it persisted across much of the South into the Civil Rights era of the 1960s.

Guests of the Nation

On a much broader national scale, whenever there weren't enough willing or available native sons to do the nation's work, we imported our labor force. During World War I, when our boys were off fighting in France, we welcomed thousands of Mexican workers – often right into forced labor situations – only to throw them out after the war ended. The pattern repeated itself prior to the Depression, and during World War II.

In 1943, the government formalized its approach to foreign labor by creating the H2, or Guestworker, program, to aid in providing temporary jobs in the Southern fields. The concept was not new; bring them in when we need them, oust them when we don't. From its beginning, the program was characterized by inequity and brutality; as recently as 1986 in Florida, Jamaican cane cutters who attempted a work stoppage over poor conditions were set upon by armed police with attack dogs, acting at the employers' behest. The workers were brutalized, loaded onto planes and sent home. The incident became known as the "Dog Wars."

The mostly Asian and Latin American immigrants who come here every year for farm and field work under the Guestworker program number in the tens of thousands, and one thing has become clear: It provides a splendid opportunity for mistreatment and enslavement. Through contractor misrepresentation and a stunningly lax government program of monitoring, the worker is often indentured before he even leaves home.

Slavery in America hit its lowest ebb by the 1960s, due largely to the nation's new outlook on Civil Rights. But beginning in the 1980s, and then exploding in the 1990s, slavery came back with a vengeance. With the end of the Cold War, and the tripling of the global population from two to over six billion, borders collapsed around the world. Countless displaced people were caught up in the fight for survival, and became easy targets for traffickers. Human trafficking grew exponentially; and America, once again, became a prime destination for slavers.

Equal Opportunity Slavery

Most Americans' concept of slavery comes right out of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Gone with the Wind* – the chains, the whip in the overseer's hand, the crack of the auctioneer's gavel. That was one form of bondage. The slavery plaguing America today takes different forms, but make no mistake, it's the real deal. Where the law sanctioned the slavery of the 1800's, today it's illegal. Where masters once took pride in the ownership of slaves as a sign of status, today's slaves are kept hid-

den, making it all the more difficult to locate the victims and punish the offenders. Where the slaves in America were once mostly African and African-American, today we have "equal opportunity" slavery; modern-day slaves come in all races, all types, and all ethnicities. We are, if anything, totally democratic when it comes to owning and abusing our fellow man. All that's required is the chance of a profit and a person weak enough and vulnerable enough to enslave.

This is capitalism at its worst. Before the American Civil War, slaves were expensive. In the 1850's, a slave sold for around $1200. In today's currency, that comes to somewhere between $40,000 and $50,000. This level of investment predisposed the owners to take care of their human property, at least to the extent that their longevity and their productivity were ensured. We're talking economics here, not kindness or humanitarianism. You would no more destroy property of such worth than you would cripple a good plow horse or neuter a seed bull.

Today's slave can be bought for as little as a hundred dollars. This makes the modern slave not only affordable, but also disposable. In the event of serious illness or injury, it's often cheaper – and less likely to arouse suspicion - to let a slave die than it is to buy medicine and services. All forms of slavery are horrific; however, today's slavery is one of the more diabolical strains to emerge in the thousands of years in which we've been enslaving our fellows, especially when you consider that it doesn't exist without a "bundle" of other crimes, including kidnapping, document fraud, assault, torture, rape, and sometimes homicide, to name just a handful.

So how many slaves are we talking about?

According to a U.S. State Department study, somewhere around 17,000 foreign nationals are trafficked into the United States from at least 35 countries and enslaved *each year*. Some victims are smuggled into the United States across the Mexican and Canadian borders; others arrive at our major airports daily, carrying either real or forged papers. The old slave ship of the 1800s has been replaced by the 747. Victims come to the United States from Africa, Asia, India, Latin America, and the former Soviet Republic. Overwhelmingly, they come on the promise of a better life, with the opportunity to work and prosper in America. Many come in the hope of earning enough money to support or send for their families. In order to afford the journey, they fork over their life savings, and go into debt to people who make promises they have no intention of keeping, and instead of opportunity, when they arrive they find bondage. They can be found – or more accurately, *no*t found – in all 50 states, working as farmhands, domestics, sweatshop and factory laborers, gardeners, restaurant and construction workers,

and victims of sexual exploitation. These people do not represent a class of poorly paid employees, working at jobs they might not like. They exist specifically to work, they are unable to leave, and are forced to live under the constant threat and reality of violence. They no longer control their own lives. By both historical and legal definition, they are slaves. Today, we may call it human trafficking, but make no mistake: It is the slave trade.

Nor are native-born Americans immune from slavers; many are stolen or enticed from the streets of their own cities and towns. I recently attended the trial of a man who was accused – and ultimately convicted – of forcing minors into prostitution, and keeping them there through violence. This is not a rare occurrence. Some sources, including the federal government, estimate in the hundreds of thousands the number of U.S. citizens – primarily children and adolescents – at risk of being caught in slavery annually.

What is particularly infuriating is the fact that this is a crime that, as a rule, goes unpunished. For the moment, let's accept the government's estimate of about 17,000 foreign nationals trafficked into slavery in the United States per year; coincidentally there are also about 17,000 people murdered in the U.S. each year. The national success rate in solving murder cases is about 70%; around 11,000 murders are "cleared" annually. But according to the U.S. government's own numbers, the annual percentage of successful trafficking and slavery prosecutions is less than 1% of the number of cases estimated to occur within a given year. In 2007, for example, the Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division obtained only 103 convictions for human trafficking.

And to further complicate matters, when they *are* rescued, survivors often deny their situation. There are several reasons for this: the language barrier, a deep sense of shame, fear for their lives and those of their families in their country of origin, and a sense of obligation to pay their debt. In addition, traffickers program them to fear the police and immigration officials. And in some instances, they come to identify with their keepers.

We don't yet know how President Obama will respond to the human trafficking crisis; it's too soon to tell. Both he and Secretary of State Clinton have been saying all the right things. But we do know that the response under the Bush Administration was inadequate on any number of levels.

Slavery comes in many guises

When the U.S. government addresses the subject of human trafficking, it has tended to focus primarily on the area of sexual exploitation. More sensational than most other forms of slavery, its victims are sub-

jected to serial rape, physical injury, psychological damage, and constant exposure to sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV.

But terrible though forced prostitution is, there are many other forms of slavery thriving right under our noses. If most of us don't see them, we're in good company; neither do most of our police or public officials. The plight of enslaved domestics factors large, and accounts for a significant number of America's slaves. In one instance, the Justice Department announced the conviction of a Wisconsin couple for human trafficking. According to the charges, they had "held the victim in a condition of servitude for 19 years, requiring her to work long hours, seven days a week…. they threatened her with deportation and imprisonment if she disobeyed them," and forced her to hide in the basement when people entered the house. The government convicted the couple on forced labor charges, and of harboring an undocumented alien; they were each sentenced to serve four years in prison. Meanwhile, where does this woman go to reclaim nineteen lost years?

Agriculture is another major area of human trafficking. There is an unknown number of victims of forced labor growing and picking our fruit and vegetables. They come to America looking for a decent wage. Instead, they are enslaved by crime syndicates and families - and sometimes, inadvertently, by our own government - in such states as Florida, North and South Carolina, and Georgia.

The good news is, there have actually been some recent inroads made in the area of agricultural servitude. When Taco Bell refused to stop buying tomatoes picked by slaves, the South Florida-based Coalition of Immokalee Workers organized a march, boycott and hunger strike, and at one point, sponsored a camp-out on the front lawn of Taco Bell's corporate headquarters. College students across the nation responded to a "Ban the Bell" campaign, and drove the fast food operation from their campuses. After stonewalling for four years, Taco Bell met with workers at the bargaining table, and – among other concessions – swore never again to purchase produce derived from slave labor. They were followed, one by one, by such major purchasers as McDonald's, A&W, Long John Silver, Pizza Hut, Whole Foods, Chipotle and Burger King. And recently, Compass Group – the world's largest foodservice organization – came aboard with all 10,000 of its companies. There are hold-outs, such as Wendy's, Wal-Mart and Quiznos, but that little workers' coalition, with the support of the public, will bring them around as well. Their message is clear: slavery and worker abuse simply will not be tolerated.

New Business Models

In researching our book, *The Slave Next Door,* Kevin Bales and I were stunned to discover the many and varied ways in which traffickers ply their trade and make their living. While the greatest number of slaves in America today falls into three categories - agricultural slavery, sexual exploitation, and domestic servitude - there is no lack of ingenuity on the part of traffickers in exploiting their victims. Slave traffickers are imaginative and innovative businessmen. Where an opportunity exists for exploitation, however strange or unlikely, there's a good chance there is a hidden slave. Here's one for you: What do deaf Mexicans and an African boys' choir have in common? In a word, slavery.

An attractive young Mexican woman named Adriana Paoletti was a major player in a particularly vicious family-run human trafficking ring. It came to be referred to as the Deaf Mexicans Case. For ten years, Adriana traveled to the poor neighborhoods of her native Mexico and enticed their deaf young people with tales of a better life in "el Norte." The vision she painted for them was a lie. The Paolettis, themselves a deaf family from Mexico, made a thriving business of illegally importing deaf and hearing-impaired men and women into California, transporting them to Chicago and New York City, and enslaving them there as street peddlers. In New York City, 57 of the deaf Mexicans were crammed into two small, rundown apartments, and forced to sleep on the floor or on bare mattresses. They were threatened, abused and beaten as a matter of course. Some of the women were systematically raped. Every day, seven days a week, they were each given 100 cheap trinkets and sent out to sell them for a dollar apiece. Some of the men were given *200* trinkets a day. They were all told not to return until every trinket was sold. For 12 to 18 hours, they would walk the city's streets or stand on corners staring at the sidewalk and holding out their trinkets; or they would ride the subways, eyes cast down, leaving with the riders a pen, or a key chain, and a small, worn card reading, "I am deaf," and returning to collect either the trinket or a dollar. If they came home at night with any trinkets left, they were beaten, shocked with stun guns, denied food and water, or locked out.

The Paoletti family made a fortune. Just do the math: With most of the 57 victims bringing home at least $100 a day, the family was taking in a minimum of $5,000 daily in New York City alone.

So why didn't the victims simply leave? After all, their knowledge of the city's streets and subway routes was staggering; and yet, their freedom to roam at will was an illusion. The victims couldn't communicate with the world outside their group. They didn't speak, write or sign English – and in many cases, couldn't read or write at all. And they were living under the constant threat of violence. Neighbors later

told the authorities of "a nightly horror show of barefoot women, clad only in nightgowns, fleeing from the houses with men in pursuit; of babies crying… unattended; of walls vibrating from slamming doors and pounding fists."

When the trafficking ring was finally broken, it was not because of the various public servants who had witnessed the conditions in which these people lived, and done nothing. It was because the victims finally decided they'd had enough. After several unsuccessful attempts to make themselves understood to the local police, four of the men were befriended by an older deaf American – a Good Samaritan. Although he spoke no Spanish, he helped them write a letter describing their enslavement. At four in the morning, they walked into a local police station and handed the letter to the desk sergeant.

What followed was a pre-dawn police raid, the arrest of the Paolettis – or at least, those who could be found - and a long difficult path towards mental and physical healing for the victims. As a senior member of the Justice Department observed, "They will need a support network all their lives." It's been over 11 years, and they see themselves as having been enslaved, as victims of fraud, and now, as survivors. No doubt they still have nightmares, still remember what it was to be slaves; and although they're free, they will always carry the scars.

Trafficking, more often than not, entails a betrayal of trust. When the betrayer is a minister of the church, and the victims are children, the crime is particularly egregious. In the 1990s, a Texas minister, traveling in Zambia, heard a local boys' choir, and asked their parents if he might take them back to Texas, where he would stage concerts for them. The money they earned, he promised, would be used to build schools and provide living essentials for members of the village. The boys went with him, and their concerts were, indeed, successful, filling churches and halls, and the money poured in. Little of it ever reached Zambia; no schools were built, and each of the boys' families received only around $20 a month. The minister kept nearly every dollar the choir earned. He also forced the boys to sing as many as seven concerts daily, and locked them in a trailer when they weren't singing. He denied them medicine when sick, and food if they dared to complain or refused to sing. He forced them to dig him a swimming pool by hand, in the hot Texas sun. And he told them that if they tried to escape, they would be severely punished. When any of the boys rebelled, they were deported in shame to Zambia, where – on the minister's word - their families disowned them.

Finally, Immigration officials questioned some of the boys, and when they found out what had been occurring at the minister's house, they were incredulous. A church choir, enslaved by a man of God…. Such things simply don't happen, and certainly not here! The facts were

borne out, however, and the group was rescued. Of the eleven boys in the choir, ten elected to remain in the United States. Most of them have not done well. Shame and alcoholism are a common thread, and there is little or no contact with their families in Zambia.

One of the boys, Given Kachepa, is a rare exception. Only eleven and an orphan when trafficked by the minister, he lived in slavery for two years; after his liberation in 2000, he was adopted by a Texas family, and introduced to a new life as a middle class American. Since then, he has graduated college, and is studying to be a dentist. Given also travels throughout the country with his adoptive mother, sharing his experience and lecturing on the realities of slavery in America.

In those early days of trafficking awareness, unless there were the physical marks and scars most officials associated with slavery, they were reluctant to pursue a case. Members of the minister's own congregation, once their suspicions were aroused, were frustrated in their repeated efforts to involve members of law enforcement. Their attempts to connect with the FBI, the Attorney General, and various senators and congressmen, as well as such high-profile media figures as Oprah Winfrey, brought no response. Neither the minister nor his family, who shared control of the boys, was ever punished or held accountable for their actions.

I used to think that this issue of modern day slavery didn't touch me personally, I was mistaken. There's a chance that the clothes I wear and the food I eat have been tainted by slavery. Cotton, that symbol of bondage in the pre-Civil War South, is now being picked by slave labor on three continents. The orange juice and tomato I have with my burger at lunch could very well have come from a Mexican or Guatemalan immigrant working under coercion. The rug we walk on at home could have been woven in India, Pakistan or Nepal by one of a hundred thousand child slaves, seven, eight, nine years old. Cell phones and lap tops require an element called tantalum; it comes from an ore that is mined in the Congo, often by slaves. Does this mean that all tomatoes, all oranges, rugs, cotton shirts, cell phones and lap tops are the products of slave labor? Certainly not; but some are, and we just never know. It's that insidious.

So who's doing what to free America's slaves?

Of the relatively few cases in which slaves are rescued, only around one-third result from government action. Another third comes from the victim escaping on his or her own; and the last third is as a result of the efforts of what we call "Good Samaritans" – in other words, us. As often as not, a concerned citizen will notice that something isn't quite right about that housekeeper next door; she cries a lot, keeps to herself,

and rarely leaves the house. A call to the authorities can bring about an investigation, but generally, sadly, we don't know what clues to look for. We're not alone; usually, the authorities don't have any idea what slavery looks like, either. According to federal law, a minor who is working in prostitution is automatically categorized as a victim of human trafficking. Yet, unless he has received the proper training, a policeman can look at an underage prostitute, and he sees only a prostitute. The possibility doesn't occur to him that she is in a coercive situation. He arrests her, and out of fear, she says nothing. And so she's victimized three times: first by the trafficker, then by the johns who rape her daily, and finally by members of the system that should be structured to rescue and support her, but instead, ensure that the cycle continues.

There *is* major federal legislation in place; it's called the Trafficking Victims Protection Act – the TVPA - and it was passed in 2000. Every two or three years, it undergoes a congressional reauthorization; this occurred in November 2008. Many significant improvements were made to the original law, but much remains to be done. Clearly, what is needed is greater awareness, organized training programs for law enforcement and for the average citizen, better cooperation among and between government agencies and non-governmental organizations, a lot more money, and a more equitable system of allocating the funding.

Thus far, 46 out of 50 states have passed their own anti-human trafficking laws, but most of them focus mainly, if not entirely, on the issue of prostitution and sex slavery. However, no one form of slavery is more horrific than another, and we simply can't afford to ignore the other types of bondage. Also, the state laws usually concentrate on catching and punishing the traffickers, and ignore the vital issue of long-term support and counseling for the survivors.

It's essential that Americans are made aware that this blight exists in our country today. Without an educated public, there is no hope of eliminating slavery. Every day, newspapers print stories of human trafficking here and abroad. Just this week, for example, a trafficker from Mexico was sentenced in Georgia for forcing young Mexican women into prostitution when they arrived in America; an ex-serviceman in Maryland confessed to forcing a 16-year-old girl into prostitution in his apartment; a police raid on a Pennsylvania spa resulted in the trafficking arrest of three South Korean women; and a New Jersey pimp pled guilty to running a human trafficking ring, in which he used drugs and violence to control his victims. The amount of material is impressive; yet, we remain oblivious. We simply cannot solve a problem we don't understand.

So. Certain things we know to be true: We know the crimes of human trafficking and slavery exist in our country, our city, and some-

times the house next door; we know there is a past-due need to train and sensitize both civilians and law enforcement to find and approach it with skill and sensitivity; and we know that without pressure from us, it will not get done. Albert Einstein said, "The world is a dangerous place, not because of those who *do* harm, but because of those who look at it without doing anything." As a society, we Americans tend to look – trusting and childlike – to our institutions and our leaders for guidance, and for salvation. Yet, if history has taught us anything, it's that the only hope of forward movement derives from whatever pressure for change we place upon our leaders, and our institutions.

America was born with the congenital disease of slavery, and, legal or not, it has never left us. Today, we are still conflicted about our ante-bellum slave past and its ugly aftermath. We study it, lament it, and argue it as a haunting presence from our dark history. Yet, while we were looking the other way, slavery in America evolved into a whole new beast that lives in darkness among us, and feeds on ignorance and misery. Only through our awareness, our concern, and our commitment can it be driven out. This problem is not covered with the dust of the past, and is clearly within our power to address and to resolve. I find it both challenging and exhilarating to think that we can be the generation to end this nation-long affliction.

1.2
"To be a Free Nation"

Myth, Ritual, and Ethics of Freedom in the Old Testament as Political Encouragement

Manfred Oeming

Israel's national anthem contains the following text:

> As long as deep in the heart,
> The soul of a Jew yearns,
> And forward to the East
> To Zion, an eye looks
> Our hope will not be lost,
> The hope of two thousand years,
> To be a free nation in our land,
> The land of Zion and Jerusalem

This text by Naftali Herz Imber summarizes central elements of Israel's self-image.[1] The author deliberately takes up old traditions when composing this anthem. The hope of freedom and national autonomy in an independent "land of Zion and Jerusalem" breathes a great deal of the spirit of biblical theology. In the following I would like to show how much this sentence "to be a free nation" (תוהל עם ישפוח *lihjot am chofschi*) incorporates a vast river of Old Testament religion.

In his description and analysis of the religion of the first Christians, Gerd Theißen used a wide concept of "religion" that is also useful for our context: religion is a cognitive and emotional relationship to the

1 Imber (1856-1909) moved to Palestine in 1882 from Galicia. His text has many political implications:"Hatikva" means "The Hope" and expresses the expectation of the Jewish people that they would someday return to the land of their forefathers as prophesied in the Hebrew Bible. Exiled from the land of Israel in 70 C.E. by the Roman army led by Titus who destroyed the Temple in Jerusalem the people of Israel lived for two thousand years in exile and said special daily prayers for return to the land while facing the East in the direction of Jerusalem. The melody was arranged by Samuel Cohen, an immigrant from Moldavia, from a musical theme in Smetana's "Moldau" (1874) that is partly based on a Scandinavian folk song.

transcendent that is articulated in a organized system of signs. This complex semiotic system contains at least three elements:[2]

*A. Myth***:** A myth explains in *narrative* form what determines the foundations of reality. These include the foundational narratives in the Bible, such as the creation narratives, the stories about the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Josef, the exodus from Egypt under Moses as well as the conquest of the land under Joshua and the Judges, the establishment of the state under Saul, David, and Solomon, the complex history of Israel and Judah up to its destruction and revival during the Persian era. In absolute numbers a history spanning about 3500 years[3], from the creation of the world to the rededication of the wall by Nehemiah, a history full of signs and wonders.

B. Ritual: Rituals are repeated behavioral patterns that interrupt daily human activity in order to cultically portray and experience the divine reality, as told in mythic narratives.

C. Ethics: In reference to the nature of God, his history with his creation and his commandments, ethics creates a framework for human activity, in which human action becomes a symbolic indication of the divine example.

D. Political encouragement. The ancient biblical traditions have many implications for changing the modern realities of slavery.

According to this model I will unfold my thoughts about freedom in the Old Testament in four directions.

A) The Myth of Freedom

Myth provides us with the view of history and reality that is determined by the current relation to a specific god. Old Testament myths are fundamentally determined by narratives about the search for one's own land and independent political existence under the guidance of YHWH, the God of Israel. Biblical historiography finds its organizing principle in the divine promise of the land and the gradual fulfillment

2 For a semiotic interpretation of religion see G. Theißen, *Die Religion der ersten Christen*, Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gütersloh 2002.

3 The Jewish calendar counts as follows: from the creation of the world until today (2012) there are 5773 years according to biblical chronology. This number can be understood in radical opposition to scientific idea of an almost infinite period of time in which the universe developed. This opposition is found especially in American creationism, which condemns Darwinism by stating that the earth was only created about 6000 years ago (see the differentiated discussion in Ronald L. Numbers: *The Creationists. The Evolution of Scientific Creationism.* University of California Press Alfred A. Knopf. New York 1992). It is also possible to understand this number symbolically as mythic expression for the fact that creation is a well-ordered system, see M. Oeming, Article "Weltbild im Alten Testament", TRE 35 (2003), 569-581.

of this promise (also including the loss of the Promised Land). The Hexateuch is carried by the tension between slavery and liberation. Shaped by the charismatic leadership of Moses and the miracles of God, the transformation of a people of slaves to a free nation plays an all-important role.

With Gerhard von Rad, I doubt whether we can refer to the Exodus as "Israel's primary confession", as *the* central kerygma of the Old Testament, *the* center of scripture; the Old Testament contains too many other "centers" (such as the revelation at Sinai, a priestly Zion-temple-theology, a prophetic vision for the future, or the wisdom teachings of action and consequence). Yet, without a doubt, the spirit of Exodus is one of the foundational pillars of Old Testament tradition history. The Exodus is one of Israel's fundamental myths (alongside the creation and patriarchal narratives, as well as the genealogical lists of true Israel in 1 Chr 1-11, in which the Chronicler deliberately pushes the Exodus-tradition into the background).

The Exodus from Egypt, the symbolic place of bondage and slavery, is so central for the Pentateuch that the Israel's God introduces himself with reference to this event:

> I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

In his acceptance speech for the his honorary doctorate, awarded by the theological faculty of the University of Heidelberg, Patrick Miller advocates that we should incorporate this introductory formula into Christian confession, as it is constitutive for the biblical image of God. Our credo should state:

> "I believe in God the almighty, creator of heaven and earth, who brought Israel from Egypt from the house of bondage ...".

With this courageous (but hardly enforceable) suggestions, Pat Miller has correctly emphasized the fact that Old Testament message of political liberation should indeed be an important part of Christian confession.

Gen 12 introduces Egypt almost as a "mythic" place of remembering: here one must fear for one's life when married to a beautiful woman; this woman will be led into Pharaoh's harem – by force, if need be. Abraham's and Sarah's exodus from Egypt, made possible by YHWH's opposition to Pharaoh ("But the LORD afflicted Pharaoh and his household with mighty plagues" – Gen 12,17) is a departure into the promised land of Canaan, a haven of freedom. This first exodus already shows how God's help enables escape from life-threatening slavery. This short episode is a precursor of national history. Under the leadership of Moses, this individual foreshadowing becomes

the experience of the entire nation and thus a central confession of faith. The many-layered myth of the Exodus from Egypt is a complex myth of a *religion of freedom*; the land flowing of milk and honey is a counter-location to the land of slavery.

> Sandro Botticelli's painting "The Story of Moses" (1481–1482), which was created in the Sistine Chapel in Rome, is a case example of this rich heritage based on the exodus from slavery – even in the Apostolic Palace, the official residence of the Pope in the Vatican City. A "royal" Moses, clothed in gold, is portrayed in seven different ways: as a murderer (which points to the tragic connection between liberation and violence!), as a fugitive, as a chivalrous hero defending Jethro's daughter (which points to the importance of military heroism), as a contemplative shepherd, as a mystical recipient of divine revelation, and as the military leader of the Exodus community.

There is heated debate over the historical truth of the Hebrew slaves in Egypt.[4] Extrabiblical sources provide us with little information, almost with nothing. Recent publications have shown once again that Israel's existence as slaves in Egypt cannot be substantiated by archaeological, iconographic or epigraphic means.[5] There are, indeed, very few archaeological witnesses regarding slave life in Egypt. Archaeology cannot illuminate this issue. The existing images all serve the purpose of glorifying the rich and the victorious. Pharaoh vanquishes his enemies and the high officials command their servants who dote on their every need.

In our reconstruction of the religious world, we are entirely dependent on the biblical texts. This is why the term "myth" is particularly appropriate: the lexeme μυθος is defined as **"fanciful story** full of wonders and phantasy. It is not highly important, however, whether Israels slavery was fictional or not, because the message that God's people are freed slaves retains its validity in any case. These mythical texts love to portray their reality in stark black and white contrast (as a pedagogical tool): Israel's existence as lowly construction slaves for Pharaoh's magnificent buildings in a Ghetto is the ultimate symbol of bondage. The most emotional and disturbing symbol of Israel's oppression is the systematic killing of all newborn Israelite boys. It is questionable whether such an action actually was part of Pharaoh's disciplinary measures against his subjects. Extrabiblical sources cannot verify this point.

Whether the road to freedom was only taken by a small "Egypt-

4 Norbert Brockmeyer, *Antike Sklaverei* (Erträge der Forschung 116), Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesells. 1987.

5 E.g. I. Finkelstein/N.A. Siberman, *The Bible unearthed. Archaeology's new vision of Ancient Israel and the origin of its sacred texts,* New York: The Free Press, 2001, 48-71.

group" of Israelites, whether it led them along the Sirbonic Sea or along the southern edge of the Sinai peninsula can hardly be confirmed today – not to mention whether this road was a secret escape or a consequence of powerful plagues. In any case: the narrative myth of the liberation from Egyptian oppression as a sign of the power of Israel's God has become a powerful comfort of the centuries and one of the favorite texts of liberation theology.

B) Rituals of Freedom

The events narrated by the mythic texts are internalized in systematic fashion. Israel develops a very intensive program of repetition and memorization in order to keep the memory of the Exodus alive. The admonitions "remember" (זכר) and "do not forget" (אל־תשכח) are the backbone of religious practice. The texts develop an incredible power for shaping culture as they are regularly read, memorized and recited. All this influences the interpretation of ritual actions. I will mention three: Sabbath, circumcision, and Passover.

The Sabbath refreshes the memory of liberation on a weekly basis. It interrupts the dictatorship of daily routine:

> Observe the Sabbath day and keep it holy, as the LORD your God has commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of the LORD your God; you shall not do any work — you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your ox or your ass, or any of your cattle, or the stranger in your settlements, so that your male and female slave may rest as you do. Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt and the LORD your God freed you from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day. (Dtn 5:12-15)

The permission to incorporate strangers by means of circumcision into the covenant between YHWH and his people is also important:

> And throughout the generations, every male among you shall be circumcised at the age of eight days. As for the homeborn slave and the one bought from an outsider who is not of your offspring. (Gen 17:12)

The primary aspects of God's liberation shape the Jewish calendar. As a kind of "catechism", the Jewish liturgical year symbolizes and actualizes the various stages of the divine liberation:

Rosh-hashana initiates the large festivities in the fall. The *Day of Atonement* as the liberation from sin, *Sukkoth* as the celebration of human beings on their path from slavery to freedom, *Simhat Torah* as a joyful celebration of the commandments of freedom, *Chanukkah* as the celebration of the liberation from the Tyrant Antiochus IV Epiphanes, *Purim* as the celebration of the liberation from Haman's genocid-

al plans, *Pesach* as the high point of the liturgical calendar celebrates the liberation out of Egypt, and *Shavuot* as the final celebration rejoicing in the revelation of the Torah.

Even if *Pesach* is thus not the only ritual in the Jewish liturgical calendar with a connection to the topic of freedom, it is the most important one. Whoever has celebrated this feast in the context of a Jewish family[6] knows of the joy that fills the celebrants on this night more than any other night of the year. For my purposes here, I do not need to go into all of the individual elements that make up the Pesach celebration. It has long been recognized that Pesach – just as also *Shavuoth* and *Sukkoth* – has shifted its original agrarian focus by "historizing" the remembrance of the one event that occasioned all other gifts of freedom (revelation at Sinai, desert wanderings).

The ritual text in Ex 12 describes the night in which the angel of the God went through Egypt and killed all first-born of the Egyptians. Only those who had smeared the blood of the Pesach lamb on their door were spared this death. Israel knows of this high price of freedom. Every first-born Jewish boy has to fast on the evening before Pesach to remind himself and all others that the first-born of Egypt had to die so that Israel could be free.

> And Moses said to the people, "Remember this day, on which you went free (יְצָאתֶם) from Egypt, the house of bondage, how the LORD freed you from it with a mighty hand: no leavened bread shall be eaten. You go free on this day, in the month of Abib. So, when the LORD has brought you into the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, which He swore to your fathers to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey, you shall observe in this month the following practice: "Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a festival of the LORD. Throughout the seven days unleavened bread shall be eaten; no leavened bread shall be found with you, and no leaven shall be found in all your territory. And you shall explain to your son on that day, 'It is because of what the LORD did for me when I went free from Egypt.' "And this shall serve you as a sign on your hand and as a reminder on your forehead — in order that the Teaching of the LORD may be in your mouth — that with a mighty hand the LORD freed you from Egypt. You shall keep this institution at its set time from year to year." (Ex 13:3-10)

We must take notice of the inner connection between Exodus and Eisodus, between the liberation from foreign oppression and the gift of a new land as a place of freedom. The fact that Josiah celebrated this

6 In 2002 und 2007 I was given the opportunity to celebrate the entire ritual with my friend Oded Lipschits in Alon Hagalil/Israel. Aside from the many family related aspects, these occasions also provided insight into the multi-perspectival symbolism of this ritual. It is entirely possible to read the entire Pesach Haggada as a manifest of freedom.

day as a central festival in Jerusalem (2 Kings 23,21ff.) was probably a clever political move that turned Pesach into the central nation celebration of Jewish freedom.

C) Ethics of freedom

In legal texts: The legal status of slaves (female and male) is – as so often in the Old Testament – nowhere presented in a clear systematic fashion; instead, many passage only imply criteria which leads to much vagueness and great debate and speculation among scholars.[7]

According to Exodus 21:32, the value of a slave was 30 shekels of silver (see the 30 shekels awarded to Judas for the betrayal of Jesus?). Lev 27:3-8 provides us with a price list, according to which the value of slave fluctuated between 10 and 50 shekels, depending on age, gender, and condition.[8] The texts differentiate between various different kinds of slaves:[9] individuals that potentially can be released from slavery as a

7 D. Boer, Erlösung aus der Sklaverei. Versuch einer biblischen Theologie im Dienst der Befreiung, Münster: Edition ITP-Kompass, 2008; Sh. Briggs, Slavery and gender, in: On the cutting edge. The study of women in biblical worlds. Essays in honor of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, ed. J. Schaberg, A. Bach, Alice, and E. Fuchs, New York; London: Continuum, 2004, 171-192; I. Cardellini, Die biblischen "Sklaven"-Gesetze im Lichte des keilschriftlichen Sklavenrechts. Ein Beitrag zur Tradition, Überlieferung und Redaktion der alttestamentlichen Rechtstexte: BBB 55, Königstein:Hanstein 1981; C.M. Carmichael, The three laws on the release of slaves (Ex 21,2-11; Dtn 15,12-18; Lev 25,39-46), ZAW 112 (2000), 509-525; G. Chirichigno, Debt-slavery in Israel and the ancient Near East. JSOT.SS 141. Sheffield: JSOT-Press, 1993; I. Fischer, Was kostet der Exodus? Monetäre Metaphern für die zentrale Rettungserfahrung Israels in einer Welt der Sklaverei, JBTh 21 (2006) 25-44; B. M. Levinson, The manumission of hermeneutics: The slave laws of the Pentateuch as a challenge to contemporary Pentateuch theory, in: Congress volume Leiden 2004 [International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament], ed. A. Lemaire, (VT.S 109), Leiden [u.a.]: Brill, 2006, 281-324; Y. Osumi, Brandmal für Brandmal. Eine Erwägung zum Talionsgesetz im Rahmen der Sklavenschutzbestimmungen, Annual of the Japanese Biblical Institute 18 (1992) 3-30; A. Schenker, Die Freilassung der hebräischen Sklaven nach Dtn 15,12 und Jer 34,8-22, in: ders., Recht und Kult im Alten Testament. Achtzehn Studien (OBO 172). Freiburg, Schweiz; Göttingen: Univ.-Verl.; Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht 2000, 150 – 157; J. van Seters, Law of the hebrew slave: A continuing debate, ZAW 119 (2007), 169-183; T. Veijola, "Du sollst daran denken, dass du Sklave gewesen bist im Lande Ägypten." Zur literarischen Stellung und theologischen Bedeutung einer Kernaussage des Deuteronomiums, in: Gott und Mensch im Dialog. Festschrift für Otto Kaiser zum 80. Geburtstag. Bd. 1. Ed. by M. Witte (BZAW 345), Berlin: de Gruyter 2004, 353 - 373.

8 30 Lot silver is equivalent to the salary 3000 working days, this means to eight years working. (Compared to present day situation it would be approximately 200.000 Euros.) In any case a healthy slave was an object of high value.

9 Cf. W. Dietrich, Sklaverei AT, TRE 31, 2000, 367-373; Heike Grieser, Konrad Hilpert, Sklave/Sklaverei, LThK^3 9, 2000, 656f.; S. Kreuzer, L. Schottroff, Sklaverei, in: