

Starting Points

The Book of Exodus starts with individuals showing up in a place that is new to them. This is not insignificant. Much of *Rereading Exodus* is about what happens -- to a place and its people -- when new folks arrive. It is also about the more usual view of Exodus as a story of getting out.

מצרים Mitzrayim

In English, the Book of Exodus takes place in "Egypt." *Rereading Exodus* uses a transliteration of the Hebrew word, "*Mitzrayim*," instead, to keep the biblical place – and its symbolic meanings – distinct from any actual country, ancient or contemporary. "*Mitzrayim*" can reference the land or a collective people/nation.

Similarly, a Hebrew transliteration, "*Yisrael*," is used to distinguish biblical from other usage. In Bible discussed here, it is both another name for Jacob and the name of a people. (At this point in the biblical story there is no place of this name. In instances where the historical or contemporary nation is meant, "Israel" is used.)

"*Yisrael-ite*" is used for an individual or the adjective form. This book uses an invented parallel term, "*Mitzrayim-ite*," (rather than "Egyptian") for individuals and the related adjective.

Unless otherwise noted, original language is maintained in quotations.

**To truly
conceive
what it
would
mean
to escape
"the
Narrow
Place"
of
the
Exodus
story
we must
first
explore
how
all the
parties
ended up
in
here
and
how
we/they
relate to
one
another.**

צר Tzar

The Hebrew "*tzar*" means "narrow" and the plural "*tzarim*" is "narrow straits."

So, based on Hebrew wordplay, *The Zohar* (a mystical work from 13th Century Spain) suggests that the Exodus story is about escaping from our own "narrow places." Centuries of later Jewish teaching elaborated themes of leaving behind constricted views and narrow-mindedness.

Partial Bibliography for *Rereading Exodus along the Anacostia*

Hebrew Bible/Tanakh:

Jewish Publication Society 1917, available on Mechon-Mamre.org. JPS 1985 on Sefaria.org

Alter, Robert. *The Five Books of Moses*. NY: Norton, 1995 (also on Sefaria now)

Fox, Everett Fox. *The Five Books of Moses*. NY: Schocken, 1995 (also on Sefaria now)

The Peoples' Companion to the Bible, Fortress Press, 2010. DeYoung, et al, eds.

Torah: A Women's Commentary. Union for Reform Judaism, 2008 (the updated JPS used is also on Sefaria now)

Books

Douglas, Kelly Brown. *Stand Your Ground: Black Bodies and the Justice of God*. (Orbis, 2015)

Gregory, Dick. *Dick Gregory's Bible Tales with Commentary*. James R. McGraw, ed. NY: Stein and Day, 1974.

Heschel, Abraham Joshua. Conference on "RELIGION AND RACE" (14 JANUARY 1963). Proceedings published as booklet. Also available online at University of Maryland, among other sites

Hurston, Zora Neale. *Moses, Man of the Mountain*. NY: Harper, 1991 (originally published: 1939)

Jacob, Benno. Jacob, Walter and Yaakov Elman, trans. *The Second Book of the Bible: Exodus, Interpreted by Benno Jacob*. Hoboken, NJ: Ktav, 1992

Magee, Rhonda V. *The Inner Work of Racial Justice: Healing Ourselves and Transforming Our Communities through Mindfulness*. NY: TarcherPerigee (Penguin Random House), 2019.

Ostriker, Alicia Suskin. *Nakedness of the Fathers*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers, 1997. Includes "The Nursing Father"

Summers, Brandi Thompson. *Black in Place: Spatial Aesthetics of Race in a Post-Chocolate City*. Chapel Hill: UNC, 2019

Articles/PDFs/Speeches

Ford, Glen. "No Compromise, No Retreat in the Fight to End Militarism and War," Keynote Address, Black Alliance for Peace, April 4, 2019. on BAP Facebook page -- available without FB account

JFREJ -- Jews for Racial & Economic Justice. www.jfrej.org

#BLM Haggadah Supplement, 2016. look for "JFREJ Haggadah Library" at jfrej.org

Understanding Antisemitism: An Offering to Our Movement, Resource from Jews for Racial & Economic Justice, 2017

Unraveling Antisemitism and Discussion Guide, 2022. <https://www.jfrej.org/campaigns/antisemitism>

Lappe, Benay. "The Crash Talk," Svara: A Traditionally Radical Yeshiva. <https://svara.org/crash/>

Spatz, V. "Toward a Jews' Self-Inventory for Bible Readers," on "A Song Every Day" blog and at Academia.edu.

Urban Institute. *The Color of Wealth in the Nation's Capital*, 2016

Full bibliography in book or visit weluvbooks.org