The Korean Journal of Old Testament Studies 74 (2019): 59-81
http://doi.org/10.24333/jkots.2019.25.4.59

In Search of God, Identity and Home with/in Others:
A Reflection on Korean Diaspora and Old Testament

Uriah Y. Kim
(Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California)

1. Introduction

Since the expulsion of Adam and Eve from their home, we are in some sense all living in diaspora. But calling a town, city, state, or country as one's home and cherishing the sense of belonging to it have left us inattentive to our diasporic conditions. The Old Testament reminds us in its telling of history of ancient Israel and stories of its people and individuals that no matter how comfortable we may feel in our homeland, or wherever we may be living, we need to pay attention to our diasporic situation in order to fully understand our life on earth and one's relation to God and others. The story of Abraham and Sarah is such a paradigmatic reminder. They left their home and lived their life as strangers and residents and experienced the state of being both guests and

hosts, which is a paradox of being diasporic people. In Genesis 23 Abraham negotiates with the people of the land, the Hittites of Kiriath-Arba (Hebron), to purchase a burial ground for his wife Sarah. Even though Abraham had resided in Canaan for decades, he asks for permission from the people for a land, claiming his rights to do so, and the people do not hesitate to allow him to acquire a real estate for his wife, thus acknowledging his claim. What is particularly interesting for our purpose is how Abraham describes himself to the Hittites:[1] "A stranger (גֵּר) and a resident (תּוֹשָׁב) I am among you" (Genesis 23:4a). Although two nouns are synonyms rather than antonyms and therefore, strictly speaking, should not be understood as expressing opposite identities, but many interpreters, especially Jewish commentators, saw this self-description of Abraham as a paradox of the situation of Jews in diaspora where they were perceived by the people of the land as both strangers and citizens.[2] This paradox also served as a guiding principle for Jews to fully participate in civic life wherever they were residing but also to maintain their own identity and tradition (e.g., Jeremiah 29:1-9; Daniel 1; Esther). Although Jewish people were forced to experience this paradox throughout their history, all of us also need to learn to live our lives as diasporic people who understand what is to be guests as well as hosts, even if they are living in their own homeland. Without fully embracing the paradox of being a guest

1 Ironically the Hittites are viewed as foreigners from the perspective of biblical writers. For a discussion on this ironic perception of the Hittites, see my article, "Uriah the Hittite: A (Con)Text of Struggle for Identity" (*Semeia* 90/91 (2002): 69-85).

2 The application of Abraham (and Sarah) as a model of diasporic being caught between two worlds or being both a guest and a host in one's residence is a very familiar theme among Korean Americans that was expressed by Korean American theologians like Lee Sang Hyun and Lee Jung Young in the 1980's and 1990's. A conversation with Rabbi Daniel Lehmann was helpful in seeing the connection between the Jewish diaspora and the context of Korean Americans. See his article "To be a Guest in the World (Parshat Behar-Behukotai, Leviticus 25:1-27:34), accessed on July 5, 2019. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/to-be-a-guest-in-the-world-parshat-behar-behukotai_b_591bd3f5e4b021dd5a828ffa.

and a host on God's earth, wherever our home may be, we will always be susceptible to identifying ourselves exclusively as hosts and mistreating our neighbors as strangers, guests, or worse, as enemies.

2. Experiences of Being an Other

Koreans living in North America are more perceptive to the paradox of being both guests and hosts than Koreans in their own homeland (Korea) and are keener to this theme in the Old Testament and in stories like that of Abraham and Sarah because they are often victims of the politics of identity in their adopted country (USA).[3] While growing up in the United States, like many Korean Americans and other minoritized people, I also struggled with the experience of being out of place, not feeling at home, and negotiating and navigating my identity and home. A racist taunt - "Go back to where you came from" - recently twitted by the president of the United States is an all-too familiar reminder to those who experienced identity politics in the United States, in which we are viewed as either perpetual foreigners or model minority at the convenience and needs of the people in power who see themselves as permanent hosts.[4] This is a strategy of the dominant group both to exploit us as second-class citizens and to use us as a political tool to punish

3 For a brief history of Koreans in the United States and how they read the Bible, see Jung Ha Kim, "The Biblical Hermeneutics: A Korean American Case" in Uriah Y. Kim and Seung Ai Yang, eds., *T&T Clark Handbook of Asian American Biblical Hermeneutics* (London: T&T Clark, 2019), pp. 81-93.

4 See the opening paragraph in my article "The Politics of Othering in North America and in the Book of Judges," *Concilium* 49/2 (2013): 32-40. Compare President Trump's tweet to President Ronald Reagan's final presidential speech in which he shared a letter from a man: "You can go to live in France, but you can't become a Frenchman. You can go to live in Germany or Italy, but you can't become a German, an Italian. He went through Turkey, Greece, Japan and other countries. But he said anyone, from any corner of the world, can come to live in the United States and become an American."

or put to shame other minorities for complaining about the state of American society. In short, Korean Americans are compelled by their context to be attentive to the diasporic situation and issues and questions that arise from it.

For some time now Asian American biblical scholars have been reflecting and writing on promises and predicaments, advantages and disadvantages of living with this paradox.[5] Asian Americans belong to two (or more) worlds or cultures (but never completely) and yet at the same time belong to neither (but never detached). We are betwixt and between two worlds that make up who we are and where our home is. We often experience double rejection (as well as double acceptance), "rejection by the host culture for being foreign and rejection by the ancestral culture for being impure."[6] Similarly this dichotomy partitions one home from another, making it almost impossible for Asian Americans to feel at home here or there.[7] Where is home for those who are attached to multiple worlds when the nationalist identity discourse prescribes one home per one identity under one nation? Kwok Pui-Lan reminds us to question "the powerful myth of home, nation, people, and

---

5 For those who are unfamiliar with works by Asian American biblical scholars on what is and how to do Asian American biblical interpretation that takes into account of the context of Asian American in North America, see the following books: Tat-siong Benny Liew and Gale A. Yee, eds., *The Bible in Asian America* (*Semeia 90/91*; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002); Mary F. Foskett and Jeffrey Kah-Jin Kuan, eds., *Ways of Being, Ways of Reading: Asian American Biblical Interpretation* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2006); Uriah Y. Kim and Seung Ai Yang, eds., *T&T Clark Handbook of Asian American Biblical Hermeneutics* (London: T&T Clark, 2019). Specifically for Korean American biblical scholarship, see Hyun Chul Paul Kim, "Currents in Korean-American Biblical Interpretation." *Journal of Korean American Ministries & Theology* 5 (2012): 7-19; John Ahn, ed., *Landscapes of Korean and Korean American Biblical Interpretation* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2019); and Wongi Park, "Korean American Biblical Criticism" (forthcoming in the Oxford Handbook on Korea and the Bible).

6 Sze-kar Wan, "Betwixt and Between: Toward a Hermeneutics of Hyphenation," in Foskett and Kuan, *Ways of Being*, p. 149.

7 I found Homi Bhabha's term "unhomely" to be particularly apt in expressing the feeling of estrangement that my "home" (that is the Unite States, therefore, I should be recognized as a host, resident, or citizen) is not mine (but I am often viewed as a guest, stranger, or foreigner).

bloodline on which a common 'origin' of belonging is generated, leading sometimes to the violent exclusion of others."[8] And she aptly observes that, in the context of globalization, "home is not a fixed and stable location but a traveling adventure, which entails seeking refuge in strange lands, bargaining for survival, and negotiating for existence."[9]

For Asian American biblical scholars who recognize the positionality of being members of a minoritized group in the United States, we are mindful of the diasporic context when we interpret the Bible. There are obvious places in the Old Testament to look if one wishes to hear voices from diaspora when you consider the fact that there are writings that were incorporated into the Old Testament canon from three broad periods of history: before the establishment of the Davidic dynasty, during the kingdom of Judah, and after the fall of Jerusalem in 587/586 BCE. Writings after the fall of Jerusalem like Esther and Daniel, which reflect the diasporic context of Jewish community in the shadow of empire, readily indicate the negotiation and navigation of identity and home they had to face.[10] One of the most common accusations against a minority group is that their way of life, culture, or religion is different from the rest of the society and therefore should not be tolerated: "There is a certain people scattered and separated among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom; their laws are different from those of every other people, and they do not keep the king's laws, so that it is not appropriate

---

8 Kwok Pui-Lan, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), p. 113.

9 Kwok Pui-Lan, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology*, p. 102.

10 For examples of such interpretations, see Jeffrey Kuan, "Diasporic Reading of a Diasporic Text: Identity Politics and Race Relations and the Book of Esther," in Fernando Segovia, ed., *Interpreting beyond Borders*, pp. 161-73; John Ahn, "Made in Babylon: Daniel 1," in Uriah Y. Kim and Seung Ai Yang, eds., *T&T Clark Handbook of Asian American Biblical Hermeneutics*, pp. 317-328.

for the king to tolerate them" (Esther 3:8; NRSV). When examining stories prior to the establishment of David's kingdom, one can also hear clear voices from diaspora, indicating the time of editing as well as the period when the ancient Israelites did not have a kingdom to call their home. In an episode in Exodus, for example, the midwives use a false assumption of Egyptians that the Hebrew women are biologically different from the Egyptian women to defend their action to save Hebrew babies: "The midwives said to Pharaoh, 'Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women; for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife comes to them'" (Exodus 1:19; NRSV).[11] The simple point I wish to convey is that the people or government in power, whenever there is a crisis, conveniently use the politics of "difference" to designate their residences as strangers and to justify their use of violence.

This is not to suggest that the people of ancient Israel only suffered as strangers, foreigners or guests from the machinations of empires or hosts at their convenience and need. Although they have been commanded to treat a stranger (גֵּר) residing among them in their land as a native born (אֶזְרָח) (Leviticus 19:33-34), there are many incidences during the time when the Davidic dynasty was ruling their land and composed and collected various writings that show ancient Israelites mimicking their suzerains in mistreating residences within their borders as strangers (guests) rather than as natives (hosts). They also took advantages of the strangers when it was convenient to do so. King Saul, for example, expelled the Gibeonites, who were promised to be treated as fellow residents, from their towns and gave their estate to

11 For example of reading this episode from Korean American context, see Esther HaeJin Park, "Women in Exodus and Asian Immigrant Women: Asian Female Immigrants' Bible Reading Strategy on Exodus 1-4," in Kim and Yang, *T&T Clark Handbook*, pp. 220-228.

his tribesmen in order to win their favor (2 Samuel 21:1-6; 1 Samuel 22:6-7). But more subtle examples involve those who were accepted as "one of our own," like Ruth, Uriah the Hittite, Rahab, among others, but they were in the end scripted as "not quite the same" as the Israelites and were marked as "different" from the perspective of biblical writers.[12] In general, the politics of identity plays an important role in shaping the discourse and policy of post-exilic community in the book of Ezra-Nehemiah and most of prophetic writings, which reflects the negotiation and navigation of the identity and socio-political space of the people of ancient Israel and their scribes who produced the texts in the shadow of empire. That is to say, the scribes were fully aware of the paradox of guests and hosts in their diasporic context and the Old Testament often reflects this reality.

3. Reading the Book of Judges from a Diasporic Context

Nearly thirty years after the LA riots and my first exposure to the term "marginality,"[13] I now have my own hermeneutical strategy that is not only

---

12 See my article, "Uriah the Hittite: A (Con)Text of Struggle for Identity" (*Semeia* 90/91 (2002): 69-85); see also Gale A. Yee who makes a similar point about Ruth the Moabite, "'She Stood in Tears Amid the Alien Corn': Ruth, the Perpetual Foreigner and Model Minority," in Randall C. Bailey, Tat-Siong Benny Liew, and Fernando F. Segovia, eds., *They Were All Together in One Place Edited* (Atlanta: SBL, 2009), pp. 119-40.

13 It was nearly thirty years ago that I was introduced to the term "marginality" by Dr. Sang-Hyun Lee, professor at Princeton Theological Seminary, who was able to explain my predicament in theological terms. In addition to articulating the problems of marginality, Dr. Lee also talked about theological promises and hermeneutical privileges of Korean Americans as sojourners or dwellers of marginality in the United States. See Sang Hyun Lee, "Pilgrimage and Home in the Wilderness of Marginality: Symbols and Context in Asian American Theology," *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 16 (1995), pp. 49-64. See also Jung Young Lee, *Marginality: The Key to Multicultural Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995). The term "marginality" has lost its appeal since then and much scholarship has been produced in the discourse of othering, especially from postcolonial scholars, adding such terms as liminality, hybridity, interstitial, minoritized, among others to articulate the politics of identity and home in our time.

based on my personal experience but more so on a long history of diverse groups of people in the United States who share common experiences and social conditions of being minoritized, which is a specific example, an American case, of the diasporic situation. By using the vocabulary and concepts developed by postcolonial thinkers, I have framed my efforts within the global movement as well as the academia. By placing the context of those who understand, experience, and acknowledge the diasporic conditions as a ground for building a hermeneutical strategy, I am challenging and reassessing the hermeneutical strategy based on the West's history and aspirations to be the permanent and exclusive hosts of world without acknowledging their other-ness.

In the last ten years or so I have been examining the book of Judges to hear voices and discourses that arise from this paradox. Since the book of Judges contains materials from three different periods of ancient Israel, as mentioned above, if we pay close attention, then we can recognize the struggle for identity and home as the people of ancient Israel went through the vicissitudes of history.[14] In particular, I have focused on the politics of othering in Judges as the scribes try to forge their identity as the normative identity for all Israelites. Moreover, the desire among the writers to establish their identity as hosts may reflect anxiety and fear among the men who have lost their male

14 My articles on Judges are: "Postcolonial Criticism: Who Is the Other in the Book of Judges?" in Gale A. Yee, ed., *Judges and Method* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), pp. 161-182; "Where is the Home for the Man of Luz?" *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 65/3 (July 2011): 250-262; "The Politics of Othering in North America and in the Book of Judges," *Concilium* 49/2 (2013): 32-40; "Is There an 'Anti-Conquest' Ideology in the Book of Judges," in Roland Boer, ed., *Postcolonialism and the Hebrew Bible: The Next Step (Semeia Studies* 70; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013), pp. 109-128; "More to the Eye than Meets the Eye: A Protest against the Empire in Samson's Death," *Biblical Interpretation* 22/1 (2014): 1-19. Moreover, an article by a GTU student I helped write: Diandra Chretain Erickson, "Judges," in Hemchand Gossai, ed., *Postcolonial Commentary and the Old Testament* (T&T Clark: London, 2019), pp. 122-141.

identity and authority in diaspora. In my research I have found that there are many characters who cannot be identify neatly into "us" (Israelites; hosts) and "them" (others; enemies; guests) and fall between these two categories as "either" (belonging to both) or "neither" (belonging to none). This indicates the complexity of identity formation due to the people's diasporic history. In order to press upon readers to recognize this complexity, I have challenged the binary thinking (us/hosts and them/guests) by arguing that such scheme not only doesn't work in Judges, but it also doesn't reflect the historical reality. In the end, it's the desire of the in-group (hosts) to see it that way in order to alienate those who are "different" from them as the foreigners/guests in order to justify their status as permanent hosts.

The book of Judges is about many things, but it is framed by two issues, home and identity. Israelites are looking to settle down and make their home in the land that supposedly had been conquered in the book of Joshua. It is apparent from the opening chapter that the matter has not been settled and that the Israelites are still looking for their home. Some tribes settle down among the Canaanites, while other tribes have the Canaanites living amongst them. No tribe is completely successful in ridding the "others" from its allotted territory. Even when Israel become strong, they do not drive out the Canaanites completely; rather they press them into forced labor (1:28), thus continuing to coexist with Canaanites and other inhabitants of the land. But this cohabitation of the land with the natives is viewed as a willful violation of God's "ban" (חֵרֶם) on the people of Canaan. According to the theology of the final editors of Judges (2:1-3:6), the primary problem with the Israelites' inability to enjoy peace in the land is that they are unfaithful to their God, and their lack of loyalty is directly connected to their mixing with the others. Although it is obvious that the Israelites still manage to be unfaithful, immoral,

and violent even without the others/enemies (chapters 17-21 clearly indicate this), the message to Israel is clear: Do not mix with the others if you wish to enjoy peace and prosperity in the land. But what if they are not in their own land and ruled by the Davidic dynasty? There's no doubt that the survival of Jewish identity in diaspora depended on their maintenance of their unique tradition and culture from the others (who happen to be hosts) but their welfare depended on their cooperation with the hosts to enjoy peace and prosperity in the land. That is to say, they had to negotiate and navigate the paradox of being both hosts and guest to enjoy peace and prosperity wherever they were living with the recognition that grave consequences can result for those who are perceived as different at the hands of people in power.

In my research on Judges some issues, questions, and topics that I explore come from my own diasporic context, and when I read Judges I try to give attention to characters and events that provide intriguing information and voices that reflect similar diasporic conditions but are often unattended by those who are concerned primarily in the interests and perspective of hosts. The man of Luz (let's call him Ishluz) in Judges 1:22-26 is a good example of a character that doesn't get much attention. However, he resonates with me in my search for home. Ishluz is either a Canaanite, a generic term for the indigenous people of the land, or, since he migrates to the land of Hittite, a Hittite, another generic term to indicate one of the peoples of Canaan who originally came from the north. The spies demand Ishluz to show them the "secret" entrance that leads into the city (1:24) and he cooperates. But unlike the young man who cooperated with the Israelites in showing the "secret" entrance to his city Succoth (Judges 8:14-16), Ishluz and his clan are sent away from Bethel (the name the Israelites give after their conquest of Luz).

For the young man there is a place for him in Succoth since he is considered "one of us," but there is no place for Ishluz in Bethel because, in the end, he is considered a foreigner/guest in a land that was once considered his home. Ishluz leaves Luz/Bethel and builds a city in the land of Hittite and calls it Luz. But why call his new home Luz? Is he trying to replicate his old home? Does he yearn to go back? This is an intriguing detail that left me wondering about where my home is and to understand Ishluz as a diasporic person.

A topic I'm currently working on has to do with the importance of language in the politics of identity. According to Judges 12:6, forty-two thousand Ephraimites were killed because they pronounced the word שִׁבֹּלֶת (סִבֹּלֶת) different from the way the Gileadites did. This difference reveals, for the writers, different origin or identity. Whenever I visit Korea, I do so with mixed emotions. On the one hand, I feel at home. Surrounded by faces that look like mine, I am able to exhale, letting go of the psychological burden of being a perpetual foreigner in the United States. In Korea, I can easily blend in as "one of us"; however, I usually get "caught" once they hear my Korean. They just know that I'm not from Korea, and thereby, I am not really one of them. I feel as though I am subjected to shibboleth tests. I do not attempt to "pass" as an American in the United States, even though I have every right to claim my American identity. However, with my heavy Korean Bronx accent and my obvious facial features, I don't try hard because I know too well who is considered a real American according to the long history of identity politics in the United States. The politics of identity has serious ramifications. Some people feel it more than others. Who controls the test? Who is subjected to the test? And what arbitrary shibboleth will be used? We all negotiate and navigate our identity wherever we go and are subjected to the politics of othering.

4. Encountering God with/in Others

Although the rhetoric used to legitimatize the majority group's position and identity as permanent hosts (as the norm and center) may bring material and political benefits to them, they have forgotten their diasporic situation, resulting in searching for God from the position of the Self (host) that impedes their access to God whenever they encounter the Other (guest). There is another approach to knowing God, the Self, and the Other that comes from those who have experienced being foreigners or strangers and understood the paradox of being hosts and guests in their residence that enabled them to see God when they engaged with others. According to Emmanuel Levinas, the Lithuanian-born French Jewish philosopher, we can move beyond ourselves ("totality" of one's world, system, knowledge, and experience) toward transcendence ("infinity," God, and the invisible) through our encounter with the others ("the stranger, the widow, and the orphan") in their naked face; in the face-to-face encounter with those who are different and independent from ourselves, the Self must react to the Other's presence, providing access to "infinity" (knowing beyond one's "totality") through "my welcoming of the other" (accepting moral claims of others).[15] This idea had been taught by Jesus when he said that peoples will be judged not by what they say or believe but by how they respond when they encounter face-to-face with the others in their need (Matthew 25:31-46). In fact, Jesus says that when we do not welcome strangers and do not help the least among our communities, we are actually rejecting the encounter with God (the face

15 Levinas in *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (Trans. Alphonso Lingis, Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1969).

of Jesus in the nakedness of the others). Levinas agrees that God's "very epiphany consists in soliciting us by his destitution in the face of the stranger, the widow, and the orphan" and concludes that "A God invisible means not only a God unimaginable, but a God accessible in justice. Ethics is the spiritual optics."[16] Without understanding, experiencing and acknowledging our diasporic state, we lose our subjectivity and access to God, which can happen whenever we encounter those who are different and independent from us, and we fail to see the paradox of being both hosts and guests on earth, which reveals our ethical responsibility toward the others.[17]

In an article I co-wrote with Ahn Ilsup, we make an argument that it is not only a Christian but also human moral responsibility to welcome and embrace the strangers who have "relation-less" friendship with the hosts.[18] Jacques Derrida, the Algerian-born French Jewish philosopher who also knows something about diaspora, deconstructs the concept of friendship (akin to fraternity) by following Emmanuel Levinas's ethical discovery of the other and the subject's passivity to the unconditional priority of the other.[19] From a philosophical point of view, Derrida's thesis of new friendship is revolutionary in that it attempts to deconstruct the fundamental

---

16 *Totality and Infinity*, p. 78. And in what Derrida calls "a powerful and formidable ellipsis," Levinas says that metaphysics leads back "to the relation with the Other, that is, to justice" (p. 89).

17 According to Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity* (Duquesne University Press: Pittsburgh, 1985), "I am responsible for the Other without waiting for reciprocity, were I to die for it. Reciprocity is his affair. It is precisely insofar as the relationship between the Other and me is not reciprocal that I am subjection to the Other; and I am 'subject' essentially in this sense" (p. 98).

18 "The Postnational Responsibility toward Undocumented Immigrants: The Practice of *Hesed* and a New Ethics of Friendship," *Covenant Quarterly* 71 (2013): 3-19.

19 Derrida, *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas* (Translated by Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naal; Stanford University Press: Stanford, 1999), in speaking of Levinas's *Totality and Infinity*, "Although the word is neither frequently used nor emphasized within it, *Totality and Infinity bequeaths to us an immense treatise of hospitality*" (p. 21).

philosophical principle of the Enlightenment by substantiating the cogito with the unconditional priority of the other. The ethical significance of this new formula - "I think, therefore I am the other" - lies in the point that one's moral decision is no longer decided by one's own moral criteria. The other's moral claims on me becomes the norm for my moral behaviors. That is, the others (strangers; guests) have various moral claims on us (when we are citizens; hosts). Due to its ethical openness to the coming of the other, Derrida's non-traditional conception of friendship as the "relationless relation to the other" provides us with an important insight in developing and establishing the human responsibility of those who are in the position of hosts toward those who are in the position of guests.

In my research on the word חֶסֶד in the Old Testament, I found it to be very similar to Derrida's radical hospitality toward "relationless" friends (that is, guests, strangers, others), which is based on Levinas's "relation to the Other as justice." Since 1926 Nelson Glueck's definition of hesed as "a conduct in accord with mutual relationships of rights and duties" became a standard with which subsequent scholars engaged.[20] Glueck noted that the responsibility to perform hesed to outsiders or strangers falls on all humans if one wishes to have a proper relationship with God: "Whoever views all men as members of his own family, and keeps the welfare of the whole human family before him, creates his own leading to the kingdom of God . . . and will achieve

20 Nelson Glueck, *Hesed in the Bible* (trans. A. Gottschalk; Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1967). See K.D. Sakenfeld, *The Meaning of Hesed in the Hebrew Bible: A New Inquiry* (Harvard Semitic Monographs, 17; Missoula, MT: Scholar Press, 1978), and G.R. Clark, *The Word Hesed in the Hebrew Bible* (JSOTSup, 157; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), for summaries of subsequent scholarship since Glueck in addition to their own contributions to it. See also chapter 2 in my *Identity and Loyalty in the David Story: A Postcolonial Reading* (Hebrew Bible Monographs, 22; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2008).

communion with God."[21] But this aspect is discussed only briefly and Glueck failed to explore further people's obligation toward other people outside one's community or those who have no established relations. Moreover, due to his overemphasis on the principle of reciprocity, Glueck did not explore the possibility of the practice of hesed based on any other principle and limited the practice of hesed to the covenantal community. B. M. Bowen, in his study of hesed, basically agreed with Glueck's definition of hesed but expanded the idea of covenantal community.[22] He argued that people who had a relationship with Yahweh were in a hesed -relationship with one another, even between Israelites and non-Israelites (e.g., the Kenites). Although Bowen, in the end, also qualified the practice of hesed to Yhwh-believing communities (a larger community than just Israel), the idea that it is an obligation that a religious person owes to all fellow human beings, rather than limiting to one's kin or community, is quite evident.[23]

Are we, therefore, obligated, morally and religiously, to extend hesed to the others? Although hesed is largely understood as ethical conduct for those who belong to the same covenantal community sharing mutual relationship of rights and duties, the possibility of its practice outside of one's community allows space where Derrida's friendship may occur and where Levinas's access to God is possible. In this regard, we could say that there is a certain deconstructive moment in the biblical concept of hesed, especially in our

---

21 Glueck, p. 64.

22 "A Study of hsd" (unpublished PhD dissertation, Yale University, 1938; the completion of B.M. Bowen's study, which was conducted independently of Glueck's work, was delayed in part because of the publication of Glueck's work in 1927.

23 Jesus taught that radical love of others is a clear identity marker of his followers (John 13:35; 1 John 4:12-13, 20-21). Although some wish to limit this love within Christian community or among believers, in Matthew 25 and other places, Jesus makes it clear that love should be extended to those who are outside their community as well.

view of hesed as universal. Indeed, there is a certain ethical resonance between the unconditional aspect of hesed which extends to those who are outside of one's community, and Derridean politics of friendship which goes beyond one's circle of fraternity and community. This ethical resonance is important since the philosophical-theological foundation of the human moral responsibility is enabled and authorized by this radical spirit of embracing the other beyond political borders or cultural identities.

I think there are three foundations for our action toward the other in the Hebrew Bible and three types of relationship between the Self and the Other that arise from them. Two relationships are familiar and well understood. There is one based on covenant or contract in which both parties are obligated by the law to fulfill certain duties and responsibilities. When a person neglects his/her duty, then the other person has recourse, like going to the court, to address the breach of contract. Then there is a relationship based on mercy, grace or compassion in which one person shows favor even though the Self is not obligated to do so and the recipient does not have moral claims on the Self. This act would be considered a gift, not a duty or obligation. There is, however, a third type of relationship that is based on hesed, in which two parties are morally obligated, but not legally, to fulfill duties and responsibilities. However, in this relationship, the Self has the moral responsibility to respond to the Other without expecting the Other to respond in return. It's not the responsibility of the Self to have the Other respond; it's the responsibility of the Other to respond. I would argue that, following Levinas, it's the response/action based on hesed toward the Other that enables revelations of God.

In short, we cannot say we know God (via metaphysics or revelation) without extending hesed toward others (via ethics or praxis). It is an

obligation that the Self owes to the Other; a person cannot discover or have access to God if he or she fails to show hesed to those in need. In my work I define hesed as a combination of 의리 and 정: if we wish to keep 의리 with God, then we need to share 정 with the stranger, the widow, the orphan, and the others in need.

5. Bibliography

Ahn, John, ed., *Landscapes of Korean and Korean American Biblical Interpretation* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2019).

Ahn, John, "Made in Babylon: Daniel 1," Uriah Y. Kim and Seung Ai Yang (eds.), *T&T Clark Handbook of Asian American Biblical Hermeneutics* (London: T&T Clark, 2019), 317-328.

Bowen, B.M, "A Study of hsd," unpublished dissertation, Yale University, 1927.

Clark, G.R., *The Word Hesed in the Hebrew Bible* (JSOTSup, 157; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993).

Derrida, Jacques. *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*, Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naal (trans. eds.) (Stanford University Press: Stanford, 1999).

Erickson, Diandra Chretain, "Judges," Hemchand Gossai (ed.), *Postcolonial Commentary and the Old Testament* (T&T Clark: London, 2019), 122-141.

Foskett, Mary F. and Jeffrey Kah-Jin Kuan, eds., *Ways of Being, Ways of Reading: Asian American Biblical Interpretation* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2006).

Glueck, Nelson, *Hesed in the Bible* A. Gottschalk (trans. ed.) (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1967).

Kim, Hyun Chul Paul, "Currents in Korean-American Biblical Interpretation," *Journal of Korean American Ministries & Theology* 5 (2012), 7-19.

Kim, Jung Ha, "The Biblical Hermeneutics: A Korean American Case," Uriah Y. Kim and Seung Ai Yang (eds.), *T&T Clark Handbook of Asian American Biblical Hermeneutics* (London: T&T Clark, 2019), 81-93.

Kim, Uriah Y., *Identity and Loyalty in the David Story: A Postcolonial Reading* (Hebrew Bible Monographs, 22; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2008).

Kim, Uriah Y., "Is There an 'Anti-Conquest' Ideology in the Book of Judges," Roland Boer (ed.), *Postcolonialism and the Hebrew Bible: The Next Step* (*Semeia Studies* 70; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013), 109-128.

Kim, Uriah Y., "More to the Eye than Meets the Eye: A Protest against the Empire in Samson's Death," *Biblical Interpretation* 22/1 (2014), 1-19.

Kim, Uriah Y., "The Politics of Othering in North America and in the Book of Judges," *Concilium* 49/2 (2013), 32-40.

Kim, Uriah Y., "Postcolonial Criticism: Who Is the Other in the Book of Judges?", Gale A. Yee (ed.), *Judges and Method* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 161-182.

Kim, Uriah Y., "Uriah the Hittite: A (Con)Text of Struggle for Identity," *Semeia* 90/91 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002), 69-85.

Kim, Uriah Y., "Where is the Home for the Man of Luz?", *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 65/3 (July 2011), 250-262.

Kim, Uriah Y. and Ilsup Ahn, "The Postnational Responsibility toward Undocumented Immigrants: The Practice of Hesed and a New Ethics of Friendship," *Covenant Quarterly* 71 (2013), 3-19.

Kim, Uriah Y. and Seung Ai Yang, eds., *T&T Clark Handbook of Asian American Biblical Hermeneutics* (London: T&T Clark, 2019).

Kuan, Jeffrey, "Diasporic Reading of a Diasporic Text: Identity Politics and Race Relations and the Book of Esther," in Fernando Segovia (ed.), *Interpreting beyond Borders* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 161-73.

Lee, Jung Young, *Marginality: The Key to Multicultural Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995).

Lee, Sang Hyun, "Pilgrimage and Home in the Wilderness of Marginality: Symbols and Context in Asian American Theology," *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 16 (1995), 49-64.

Lehmann, Daniel. "To be a Guest in the World (Parshat Behar-Behukotai, Leviticus 25:1-27:34), accessed on July 5, 2019. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/to-be-a-guest-in-the-world-parshat-behar behukotai_b_591bd3f5e4b021dd5a828ffa

Levinas, Emmanuel, *Ethics and Infinity* (Duquesne University Press: Pittsburgh, 1985).

Levinas, Emmanuel, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* Alphonso Lingis (trans. ed.) (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1969).

Liew, Tat-siong Benny and Gale A. Yee, eds., *The Bible in Asian America, Semeia* 90/91 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002).

Park, Esther HaeJin, "Women in Exodus and Asian Immigrant Women: Asian Female Immigrants' Bible Reading Strategy on Exodus 1-4," Uriah Y. Kim and Seung Ai Yang (eds.), *T&T Clark Handbook* (London: T&T Clark, 2019), 220-228.

Park, Wongi, "Korean American Biblical Criticism" (forthcoming in the

Oxford Handbook on Korea and the Bible).

Pui-Lan, Kwok, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005).

Sakenfeld, K.D, *The Meaning of Hesed in the Hebrew Bible: A New Inquiry* (Harvard Semitic Monographs, 17; Missoula, MT: Scholar Press, 1978).

Wan, Sze-kar, "Betwixt and Between: Toward a Hermeneutics of Hyphenation," Mary F. Foskett and Jeffrey Kah-Jin Kuan (eds.), *Ways of Being, Ways of Reading: Asian American Biblical Interpretation* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2006), 149.

Yee, Gale A., "'She Stood in Tears Amid the Alien Corn': Ruth, the Perpetual Foreigner and Model Minority," Randall C. Bailey, Tat-Siong Benny Liew, and Fernando F. Segovia (eds.), *They Were All Together in One Place* (Atlanta: SBL, 2009), 119-40.

Key Words

Diaspora
Korean Americans
Judges
Levinas
Derrida
Othering

구약성서와 디아스포라:
타자와 함께/안에 있는 하나님, 정체성, 집을 찾아서

Uriah Y. Kim, Ph.D.
교수, 미국 GTU (버클리 연합 신학대학원)
John Dillenberger 성서학 석좌교수

아담과 하와가 에덴동산에서 쫓겨난 이래로, 우리는 어떤 의미에서 디아스포라 가운데 살고 있다고 볼 수 있다. 그러나 사람들은 마을이나 도시 또는 나라를 자신의 집이라고 부르거나 거기에 속했다는 느낌을 가짐으로 자신의 디아스포라 상태를 주목하지 못하게 되었다. 구약성서는 우리가 집에서 편안함을 느끼거나 또는 어디에 살든지 간에 지상에서 우리의 삶과 하나님과의 관계, 그리고 우리와 다른 사람들과의 관계를 충분히 이해하기 위하여 우리의 디아스포라 상태에 관심을 가질 필요가 있다는 것을 가르친다. 아브라함과 사라는 집을 떠나서 이방인이요 나그네의 삶을 살았고, 디아스포라 백성들의 역설적인 상태인, 손님이면서 동시에 주인인 상태를 경험하였다. 북미주(North America)에 살고 있는 한인들은 모국 땅에 살고 있는 한인들보다도 구약성서

에 있는 이러한 주제나 아브라함과 사라와 같은 삶을 사는 사람들의 이야기에 예민하게 반응하였다. 필자가 지난 10여년간 수행한 연구를 돌아보니, 이 연구는 한국계 미국인(Korean American)의 지위를 살펴보고, 타자됨(othering)의 정치학이 한국계 미국인(Korean American)과 다른 소수화된(minoritized) 그룹들이 그 땅에서 영원한 주인이 될 수 없는 "영원한 이방인"을 가리키는데 사용되었다고 주장한다. 다수(majority) 그룹의 지위(position)와 영원한 주인이라는 정체성(identity)을 합리화하는 데 사용된 그러한 수사학이 물질적이고 정치적인 이득을 가져올 수는 있지만, 자신들의 디아스포라적인 상태를 잊어버리고 주인인 자신(the Self)의 지위로 하나님을 찾음으로 나그네인 타자(the Other)를 만날 때마다 하나님에게 이르는 길을 방해받게 된다. 하나님, 자신(the Self), 그리고 타자(the Other)를 아는 또 다른 접근 방법은 타자(손님, 외국인, 이방인) 의 위치에 있음을 경험함으로 다른 사람들을 만날 때 하나님을 볼 수 있게 만든 자신의 거주지에서의 주인이요 동시에 손님으로 있는 역설을 이해하는 사람들로부터 온다. 한국계 미국인(Korean-American) 성서학자들은 그들의 디아스포라적인 상황에서 다져진 해석학적인 전략을 발전시키고, 구약성서를 읽을 때 이 전통을 가까이 따르고 있다.

검색어

디아스포라
한국계 미국인
사사기
에마뉘엘 레비나스
자크 데리다
타인/타자

■ 투고일: 2019년 10월 6일
■ 심사일: 2019년 10월 26일
■ 게재 확정일: 2019년 10월 29일