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Recognizing Responsibility and Standing with Victims

Studying Women of the Old Testament

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Some stories in the Old Testament are difficult to read because of the violence and terrors they portray. Existing in stark contrast to the many powerful Old Testament stories of God's devotion to and saving of humankind, it is easy to understand why they have traditionally been neglected. However, as Frances Taylor Gench, professor of biblical interpretation at Union Presbyterian Seminary, reminds us, "Biblical texts . . . do not exist to make us comfortable. They exist to make us think, to be engaged by God, and to effect our transformation."[1] Many of these troublesome texts—of which a significant number involve the lives of women—are well poised to do just that. The issues they raise of power, violence, abuse, complicity, and subjugation are all too relevant in today's society, and the reflection they provoke may aid us as we work toward individual and societal change. Fortunately, for the past forty years, biblical scholars who apply a feminist hermeneutic (a method or theory of interpretation that

places women at the center of the study of biblical texts) have taken a special interest in studying these traumatic stories to reveal what they say about women, their situation, and their relevancy for today's readers. And what many of them have uncovered is impressive. These readings and feminist hermeneutics itself, however, remain outside most individuals' understanding of the scriptures. To illustrate the value of reading with the women of the Bible, I highlight three stories that, when studied through a feminist lens, reinforce the continued relevancy of the Old Testament for confronting modern challenges, particularly the challenges of violence, abuse, and the exploitation of those who are marginalized and disadvantaged. A close study of the biblical narrative makes it clear that God does not condone these actions but rather that he desires us to recognize our responsibility to fight injustices and to stand with victims.

Since some may be wary of the term *feminism*, I begin with a brief overview of what is meant by a feminist hermeneutic and what it has contributed to our study of the Bible. After that, I turn my attention to the story of Hagar and Sarah to illustrate how to read deliberately with the female figures in the story and to share what new lessons we may find in the text when we choose to do so. I next analyze the story of Tamar's rape to disclose the power that exists in these horrifying texts, their applicability to today, and some ways in which teaching such stories may create a needed, biblically sanctioned space to discuss abuse openly within Church settings. I end with the account of women defying the Pharaoh in the book of Exodus to provide dynamic examples of how individuals can work toward ending oppression, abuse, and other social injustices.

Feminist Hermeneutic

What is feminism? Feminism has a long history that is outside the purview of this chapter, and no single definition would satisfy all those who identify as feminist. Most, however, could support the explanation of Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, professor of Old Testament

literature and exegesis emerita at Princeton Theological Seminary: "A feminist, broadly speaking, is one who seeks justice and equality for all people and who is especially concerned for the fate of women—all women—in the midst of all people. Such a definition means that issues pertinent to racism, classism, and ecology, as well as peace-making are parts of the purview of feminism."[2]

Sakenfeld's explanation of feminism fits well within the concept of feminism recently endorsed by the Church in an official statement in the January 2020 *New Era*. "Feminism can mean different things to different people. Sometimes it refers to efforts to ensure basic human rights and basic fairness for women, as well as efforts to encourage women to obtain an education, develop their talents, and serve humankind in any field they choose. Latter-day Saints support these things." The Church does not support, however, "certain philosophies and social movements bearing the feminism label [that] advocate extreme ideas that are not in harmony with the teachings of the gospel."[3] Feminism, as the Church's statement recognizes, is a complicated label because it has frequently been used to describe positions of many different movements and groups. Proponents of first-wave feminism, second-wave feminism, third-wave feminism, postfeminism, and fourth-wave feminism advocated for various rights and opportunities that they believed would improve women's position in the world. As members of the Church, we may readily support many of their objectives, but some we may not. Similarly, biblical scholarship produced through a feminist hermeneutic, like all biblical scholarship, is a mixed bag. Some scholarship will help us understand the scriptures, the individuals within the scriptures, and the Lord better, while some scholarship will not. Consequently, we must be careful and discerning as we engage with biblical scholarship. This caution, however, should not prevent our engagement with scholarship, as the payoff can be immense. Well-trained biblical scholars may help us understand concepts that would otherwise be baffling. In this chapter, I seek to acquaint readers with some of the

best Old Testament feminist scholars and to provide an understanding of the generally accepted philosophy that undergirds feminist hermeneutics.[4]

To study scriptures through a feminist lens or with a feminist hermeneutic is to study the Bible with a sensitivity toward issues of gender. This approach focuses on traditionally marginal characters, namely women; recognizes how women's lives have been represented and distorted; and acknowledges the polyvalency (or multiplicity of readings) inherent within the Bible. As Phyllis Trible, a foremost feminist biblical scholar and professor emerita of Old Testament at Union Theological Seminary, explains, "Despite attempts at harmonization by ancient redactors and modern critics, the Bible remains full of conflicts and contradictions. It resists the captivity of any one perspective. . . . Understanding that every culture contains a counterculture, feminism seeks these other voices in Scripture."[5] For Trible and many other feminist exegetes, the goal of feminist hermeneutics "is healing, wholeness, joy and well-being."[6] Feminist interpreters are not dispassionate interlocutors of the text but rather individuals who use biblical stories to raise awareness of contemporary social problems and to motivate readers toward new ways of seeing and behaving.

Alice Ogden Bellis, professor of Hebrew Bible at Howard University School of Divinity, lists the following important contributions of feminist interpreters to the field of biblical studies:

1. Beginning a systematic investigation into the status and role of women in ancient Israelite [and early Christian] culture.
2. The rediscovery and assessment of overlooked biblical traditions involving women.
3. The reassessment of famous passages and books about women, such as the book of Ruth.
4. The discovery of feminine images of God in the Bible.
5. Developments in the area of translation principles relating to women's concerns.

6. Consideration of the history or reception and appropriation of biblical texts about women in various cultural settings, especially in art (both graphic and cinematographic), literature, and more recently music.[7]

To this list, I would add the recognition of how positionality influences one's reading of the text. Before the advent of a feminist hermeneutics in the 1970s, scholars largely portrayed their readings as being objective, unmarred by personal biases. Feminist interpreters, however, have revealed "the importance of social location in the act of biblical interpretation. All of us bring our own political, gender, racial, and religious biases to a biblical text, which affect not only what we see, but even the questions we think to ask."[8] The need to read the Bible outside of one's paradigm is now largely recognized and has led to an explosion of new readings that forefront scholars' positionality in their interpretation of the text.

The stories of numerous women in the Bible have been recovered and reassessed through the efforts of feminist interpreters. The focus of this chapter will now shift to displaying how the reinterpretations of three of these stories involving women provide guidance for how individuals ought to care for those who have been victimized, marginalized, or disadvantaged. I purposely refer to these texts as stories involving women rather than as women's stories because the stories are arguably never told from a woman's perspective; instead, these stories are "all authored by men, written in androcentric (i.e., male-centered) language, and reflective of male religious experience."[9] This is to be expected given the culture and time in which the Bible was created, and mentioning this fact is not intended to be a criticism. After all, if we wish to fault texts for being androcentric, we will need to take issue with the vast majority of texts written before the twentieth century.

Recognizing the Bible as an androcentric text is an important step within the feminist hermeneutic because it enables readers to ask new questions of the text and to explicitly choose to read with

the females in the story, or in other words to try to empathetically understand and experience the story from the perspective of the female figures rather than with the male author or narrator, as our normal reading practices have conditioned us to do. Rereading from this perspective allows us to see other readings inherent within the text. As Trible reminds us, these are not readings that we are imposing on the text but rather readings that we are exposing. "Tradition history teaches that the meaning and function of biblical materials is fluid. As Scripture moves through history, it is appropriated for new settings. Varied and diverse traditions appear, disappear, and reappear from occasion to occasion."[10] As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we believe, as President Dallin H. Oaks writes, in "the principle that scriptures can have multiple meanings," and we can feel comfortable in engaging in the type of rereading that Trible is encouraging.[11] As Trible goes on to explain, we will be "unfaithful readers" if we do not continue to recover these alternative readings inherent within the text. "Therein we shall be explorers who embrace both old and new in the pilgrimage of faith."[12] In other words, we might say, the polyvalent nature of scriptures allows us to find universal and gynocentric perspectives and meanings within androcentric texts.

Sarah and Hagar

To show how this may work, I begin with the story involving Sarah and Hagar. The author or editor of Genesis frames this portion of the text as the story of Abraham, his covenant with God, and the advent of the house of Israel beginning with Abraham and continuing through Isaac (Genesis 11–25).[13] Within this story is the fascinating depiction of two women: Sarah and Hagar. When we place these women's experiences at the center of our inquiry, the text raises questions about abuse, barrenness and surrogacy, plural marriage, degrees of power, agency, and victimization. We are also compelled to think

about our treatment of those who are marginalized and disadvantaged and about our responsibility to aid and assist.

Sarai, who eventually will become known as Sarah after the Lord changes her name (Genesis 17:15), is a complicated figure: she is often praised and often maligned. If we are to read with her, we must first seek to understand her and her actions in light of cultural expectations. Sarah desperately desires a child, in particular a son, likely because she wants to bring about the fulfillment of God's promise to her husband that he shall have posterity as numberless as the stars in heaven (Genesis 15:4–5) and because in ancient Near Eastern society a woman's worth is invariably linked to her ability to bear children. Additionally, God was believed to control the womb, so barrenness was often viewed as a punishment from God.[14] As Sarah herself stated, "Behold now, the Lord hath restrained me from bearing" (Genesis 16:2).[15] What must this have been like for Sarah to endure decades of infertility, believing that God was deliberately preventing her from having a child? How difficult was it for Sarah to admit her incompleteness and offer Hagar to Abraham with the hope that she might "obtain children by her" (Genesis 16:2)?[16] Was this her idea as indicated in Genesis 16:1, or are her words a response to a commandment from the Lord? As we learn from a revelation given to Joseph Smith, the Lord "commanded Abraham to take Hagar to wife" (Doctrine and Covenants 132:65). How must Sarah have felt when Hagar conceived and saw her own status diminishing within the household (Genesis 16:1–6)? What was life like for Sarah during the fourteen years that Hagar had a child and she did not? What anguish did she suffer? What did it feel like to believe that the Lord's promise of numberless posterity made to her husband did not include her as well (Genesis 15:4–5)? To read with Sarah is to recognize that the Lord's promise to Abraham did not at first specify Sarah as coprogenitor (Genesis 15:2–5, Abraham 2:9–11). What astonishment did she feel when she learned that the Lord's covenant with her husband did expressly include her and that she was to conceive a child at ninety years old and become "a *mother* of nations" (Genesis

17:15–21)? What remarkable joy did Sarah feel when she finally conceived and bore Isaac (Genesis 21:1–8)? How protective was she of her son and how great was her fear of a dangerous rivalry between him and Ishmael? Was this a real or unsubstantiated fear (Genesis 21:9–11)? How did she feel when God sanctioned her request to banish Hagar and Ishmael from the household (Genesis 12:12)?

To read with Sarah, we must remember that before Hagar entered their lives, Sarah was placed in a highly dangerous situation when Abraham, as instructed by the Lord (Abraham 2:22–25), told Pharaoh during their sojourn in Egypt that Sarah was his sister. She was subsequently taken into Pharaoh's house, ostensibly into his harem to be his wife (Genesis 12:10–20). What was this experience like for Sarah? What control over her life and body did she have during this time? Though the text is unclear on whether or not she had sexual relations with Pharaoh, she would have lived in fear of that happening.[17] Here, Sarah is a victim who experienced and felt who knows what terrors—even if she did (one hopes) have faith that the Lord would save her as he had saved Abraham from being sacrificed by the priest of Elkenah (Abraham 1:7–16). Consequently, her subsequent oppression of Hagar should be understood within a cycle of abuse. Sadly, we know that suffering does not necessarily lead to empathy and concern for others; we must consciously choose to experience empathy and to avoid passing on the mistreatment, offenses, and perhaps even abuse that we have suffered. Though Sarah was the chosen matriarch of the house of Israel, she was also a fallen individual—like all of us—in need of a Savior.

When we read this narrative with Hagar, we discover a story of terrible victimization as we imagine how Hagar, a slave, felt as she first becomes a surrogate womb for Sarah, is then treated harshly (or perhaps even abused) by Sarah (Genesis 16:1–6), and is eventually forced into exile in the unrelenting wilderness with her son, Ishmael, where they fear for their lives (Genesis 21:14–21). Yet by reading with Hagar, we also discover a woman who courageously flees her oppression, calls down assistance from heaven, receives her own promise of

never-ending descendants, dares to give the divine figure who appears to her a name, has sufficient faith in the Lord to return to Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 16:7–14), and eventually becomes the free matriarch of her people (Genesis 21:21). Reading with Hagar does not create a monolithic understanding of her and her story; rather, as the numerous interpretations of her by feminist scholars have shown, reading with Hagar opens up a multiplicity of ways to understand her and her story.

In general, these interpretations of Hagar may be divided into critical, closed readings or open, utopian readings. As these overarching perspectives (closed or open) strongly influence the reading one uncovers in biblical stories, it is useful to identify our own leanings and that of the scholars we read. Critical or closed feminist readings "show how women in literature reflect gender constraints . . . [and] the ways in which male power is imposed on female society."[18] Women's victimization, in a closed reading, is often exposed, explored, and lamented. In contrast, utopian or open feminist readings resist seeing women as passive victims. Instead, scholars of this persuasion "describe how women find means of self-assertion, survival, promotion, creativity, and self-expression within certain circumscribed and potentially limiting gender boundaries."[19] In the nuances of the text, they search for avowals of female identity and agency. Both perspectives (closed and open) are valid and necessary as together they enable a more complex and full understanding of biblical women and the contexts in which they lived.

Immersing ourselves in a critical reading of Hagar such as that offered by Phyllis Trible in *Texts of Terror* allows us, as Walter Brueggemann writes, to "notice in the text the terror, violence, and pathos that more conventional methods have missed."[20] In explaining her own book project, Trible writes, "It recounts tales of terror *in memoriam* to offer sympathetic readings of abused women. . . . It interprets stories of outrage on behalf of their female victims in order to recover a neglected history, to remember a past that the present embodies, and to pray that these terrors shall not come to

pass again."[21] Trible's explanation of her project captures an inherent motivation within most feminist exegesis: to use the biblical text as a catalyst to enable and promote needed changes today. Trible does this in her reading of Hagar's story by making explicit the abuse Hagar suffered at the hands of Sarah and Abraham, by pointing out how the narrator consistently undermines Hagar to promote the Isaac/Israel focus of the text, and by helping readers feel the fear and anguish Hagar felt as she is exiled to the wilderness with her son and is on the brink of death. As Hagar's story depicts oppression in the familiar forms of gender, class, and nationality, it may likewise serve as a valuable starting point for discussing needed societal changes in each of these areas. Visualizing the oppression that Hagar experienced should not be shied away from, since the insights we gain from that can inspire us to personally apply the counsel from our Prophet Russell M. Nelson "to build bridges of cooperation instead of walls of segregation" and "to lead out in abandoning attitudes and actions of prejudice . . . [and] to promote respect for all of God's children."[22]

To fully appreciate Hagar we must also view her story through an open, utopian lens. To do this we begin with the remarkable moment when Hagar takes command of her own life and flees into the wilderness. From the text, we learn that conceiving a child changes Hagar. She gains a greater sense of her own worth, and she is no longer respectful and subservient to Sarah. Rather, she "despised" her (Genesis 16:4 KJV) or "looked with contempt on her mistress" (Genesis 16:4 NRSV). We do not know what this may have looked like in actuality, but many commentators uncomfortable with Sarah's harsh treatment of Hagar have used this description to justify Sarah's conduct toward Hagar by placing the blame on Hagar.[23] Feminist interpreters recognizing the significant power differential between the two women do not allow Hagar's contempt for Sarah to justify Sarah's actions toward Hagar, but they do acknowledge how difficult this seeming loss of power and status would have been for Sarah. From the text, we learn that Sarah responds to Hagar's contempt by dealing "hardly" with her (Genesis 16:6 KJV). "In the Piel stem the

verb (*anah*) means 'to afflict, to oppress, to treat harshly, to mistreat.'"[24] What this looked like in reality is open to multiple interpretations. It could mean that Sarah reverts to treating Hagar like an ordinary slave, or it could mean that Sarah harshly abuses Hagar. One simply does not know. What we do know from the text is that Hagar flees from Sarah into the wilderness (Genesis 16:6–7). Explaining the context in which this decision takes place, Carol Meyers, professor emerita of religious studies at Duke University, writes, "the concept of either women or men striving for personal independence is antithetical to the dynamics and demands of premodern agrarians."[25] "A person's sense of individual agency was derived from her or his contribution to household life rather than from individual accomplishment. Household members did not act on their own wants or desires."[26] Consequently, in fleeing, Hagar demonstrates both courage and a surprising sense of self.

Hagar's brief time in the wilderness establishes her as a remarkable figure. An angel of the Lord appears to her, and she becomes the first woman in the Old Testament to hear a birth annunciation and the only woman in the Bible to receive a divine promise of numerous descendants not through a man but as her own prerogative (Genesis 16:7–12). The text states, "The angel of the Lord said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude. And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the Lord hath heard thy affliction" (Genesis 16:10–11). During this encounter, Hagar also becomes the only person in the Old Testament to pronounce a name on a divine messenger or perhaps the Lord. Whether she is naming an angel of the Lord or the Lord himself is unclear as the text changes midway through from referencing the divine messenger as an angel of the Lord to instead the Lord: "And she called the name of the Lord that spake unto her, Thou God seest me" (Genesis 16:13). While many individuals in the Bible give a name to the place where they encounter the Lord, Hagar is the only individual who actually names the Lord or the Lord's messenger.

Clearly, Hagar is a singular individual who has an important role to play in God's plan. This event serves as a tangible example of Nephi's words: "He inviteth them all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; . . . all are alike unto God" (2 Nephi 26:33). That a divine messenger came to a female slave should alert readers to the fact that God does not support the divisions we often create to separate and subjugate one another. Tikva Frymer-Kensky, professor emerita of Hebrew Bible and the history of Judaism at the University of Chicago Divinity School, adopts an open feminist reading of Hagar and Ishmael's exile, providing further support of Nephi's message. Frymer-Kensky begins by reminding us "that in a world in which slavery is accepted, Hagar and Ishmael are not sold: they are freed. Hagar and Ishmael leave Abraham's household as emancipated slaves."[27] Once in the wilderness, God miraculously preserves them and again pronounces a great future for Ishmael. Reading into the last line of their story, "his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt" (Genesis 21:21), Frymer-Kensky points out how Hagar has become the head of her family and lineage. "The final note in the story reminds us that Ishmael's future is shaped by Hagar's understanding. A single mother, she is both father and mother, completing her parental duties by arranging for his marriage. . . . God has given Hagar that right by treating her as the head of her own family and lineage."[28] In the honors and sympathy God bestows on Hagar at various times, we may see his great regard for all people and in turn the great regard we too should have for all people.

For many, however, God's concern for Hagar is complicated by his command to her to return and submit to Sarah. This command has perplexed and troubled many readers who see God as a God of liberation. Unfortunately, there is no definitive or easy way to understand this directive. Many have seen it as simply a necessary a part of God's plan for Abraham's descendants. After all, Ishmael too undergoes the rite of circumcision and gains rights of inheritance from being born in the house of Abraham. As the Lord promises Abraham, "And as for

Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation" (Genesis 17:20). Being born in the house of Abraham and raised under Abraham's tutelage until the age of seventeen was clearly God's plan for Ishmael.[29] Likewise, the separation of Ishmael and Isaac was possibly a part of God's plan because he sanctions Sarah's request to expel Hagar and Ishmael from Abraham's household (Genesis 21:12). Some who are dissatisfied with this answer, for a variety of reasons, turn to context to establish the impossibility of a pregnant woman surviving in the wilderness and thereby offer an alternative explanation: Hagar must return because there is no other way for her to survive.[30] While this reading is highly plausible, it is complicated by the miracles we see God perform elsewhere to sustain the lives of the children of Israel in the wilderness during the Exodus and to provide water for Hagar during her second time in the wilderness. Clearly, God is a God of miracles who can do all things, so why does he at times liberate and at other times say "return . . . and submit" (Genesis 16:9)?

Womanist[31] theologian and professor emerita of theology and culture at Union Theological Seminary Delores Williams answers this question through a compelling reading of the story that shows that "God's response to Hagar's (and her child's) situation was survival and involvement in their developments of an appropriate quality of life, that is appropriate to their situation and their heritage."[32] Williams argues that recognizing how God is at work in the survival and quality-of-life struggles of many families is equally important to seeing God at work in liberating individuals and communities. Summarizing Williams's argument, Sakenfeld writes, "Since it is unlikely that racism, sexism, or economic exploitation will disappear in the near future, our theology needs to have room for God to be at work supporting and caring about those who are oppressed within these structures from which there is no apparent escaping. God is present and at work in the struggles for survival and some degree of quality of life within all the brokenness of this world. . . .

God helps people . . . 'make a way out of no way.'"[33] The sentiments from these theologians are similar to the many expressions from General Authorities in our Church regarding our need to recognize how God strengthens us in our difficulties and trials. As Elder Jeffrey R. Holland eloquently states, "[Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ] sustain us in our hour of need—and always will, even if we cannot recognize that intervention."[34] Being able to see God at work in liberation and survival/quality-of-life struggles is key to a mature faith. However, our twenty-first-century discomfort with the command for Hager to return and submit to her oppressor will hopefully persuade us to work for the liberation of all those who are oppressed.

While the relationship between Sarah and Hagar is troubled and not to be emulated, the preservation of the story of their relationship has enormous value to contemporary readers because it asks us to confront and honestly evaluate how we treat those who are in any way socially or economically less advantaged than ourselves. Relating this story to contemporary women, Lynn Japinga, professor of religion at Hope College, writes, "One of the painful realities of the feminist movement has been that while middle-class white women recognized their own oppression, they did not always recognize the ways they oppressed women of other classes or ethnic groups. . . . Middle-class women hired African American or Hispanic women as domestics, at times without providing adequate pay or respect."[35] Too often we recognize our own marginalization, difficulties, sorrows, and oppression without recognizing how we directly and indirectly contribute to the marginalization, difficulties, sorrows, and oppression of others. A careful reading of Sarah and Hagar's relationship obliges us to assess the ways that our privilege shapes our relationships and actions. It requires us to grapple with how we may responsibly and equitably deal with power and privilege. It urges us to consider how we contribute to the exploitation of others, how we interact with individuals of a different ethnic group or economic class, and what we will do to ensure that as we work toward our own good we do not do so at the expense of others, especially those whose position in society is

more marginal than our own. Reading with Sarah and Hagar, we cannot help but feel the relevancy of their story for today. As Renita Weems—former vice president, academic dean, and professor of biblical studies at American Baptist College—writes, "Theirs is a story of ethnic prejudice exacerbated by economic and sexual exploitation. Theirs is a story of conflict, women betraying women, mothers conspiring against mothers. Theirs is a story of social rivalry."[36] Consequently, if we are willing to read authentically and openly with Sarah and Hagar (and create a space where the Holy Spirit may teach us) then the text will call us up short, it will help us recognize the various ways in which we are complicit in oppressing others, and it will inspire us to work in solidarity with one another.

Tamar

Having looked at how feminist scholars can help us see new relevancy in the story of two well-known biblical women, we turn our attention to a woman who has been systematically neglected in Christian denominations: Tamar, a daughter of King David. Tamar's story is one of a sizable group of Old Testament stories that have traditionally been left out of the Catholic lectionary, the preaching from Protestant pulpits, and the Gospel Doctrine classes of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints because of the pain and horrors they depict. While this decision is understandable, these harrowing stories have much to teach us and should not be overlooked. Tamar's story found in chapter 13 of 2 Samuel is one of the most disturbing stories in the Old Testament. Tamar is forcibly raped by her half-brother Amnon. Although we may be understandably uncomfortable using disturbing terms such as *rape* and *abuse* and may prefer to use terms such as *defiled* and *mistreated*, it is important for us to accurately label these events. Failing to do so prevents us from recognizing the horrors that occurred anciently and more importantly from acknowledging the horrors that occur today. Using more euphemistic terms is part of the culture of silence that enables atrocities to

continue. Consequently, although we would prefer to look away from these terrors, for the next few pages we will carefully analyze Tamar's rape to see what it reveals about Tamar and how her story can aid us in helping victims of abuse today.

A conspiracy of men aid and abet Amnon's crime, and a male conspiracy of silence follows the act. Two years later, Absalom avenges his sister by killing Amnon, but one wonders if Absalom murders Amnon solely to get revenge for Tamar or in part to pave the way for himself to inherit David's throne.[37] In the end, Tamar is left desolate in Absalom's house and King David is found mourning bitterly not for Tamar but for her rapist. A highly alarming story, it has remained largely in obscurity, most often only acknowledged in discussions about the larger story of who will take over David's kingdom.[38] Phyllis Trible was the first feminist exegete to look carefully at Tamar's story to see what it said about Tamar and her experience. Through careful analysis, she revealed a well-crafted story in which the narrator sides with and represents Tamar as a woman of wisdom.[39] Since then, many individuals have taken up the task to read with Tamar and to not look away from the atrocity she suffered—the results have been profound.

Tamar is an articulate, strong woman who refuses to be silent. Sent by her father David to prepare the *biryah,* quite possibly a medicinal concoction, for her half-brother Amnon, who feigns illness and requests to have Tamar sent to him that he "may be healed through her hand" (2 Samuel 13:6),[40] Tamar goes to Amnon without suspicion.[41] The narrator emphasizes her innocence as she prepares the cakes before him at his house and then enters his bedroom to serve them to him. Once he has her alone, he seizes her, saying, "Come lie with me, my sister" (2 Samuel 13:11). She responds with a vigorous no, reminding him that he is her brother and that he is forcing her. To persuade him to forego his plan, she speaks of their cultural heritage and communal values that label his intentions vile and evil. She also reminds him of the devastating consequences for her and for him if he proceeds. Finally, Tamar offers an alternative

to rape: Amnon may ask the king to take her as his wife (2 Samuel 13:12–13). Amnon is unpersuaded by her wisdom and viciously takes her. A number of scholars have noted how the particular phrasing in Hebrew "stress[es] his brutality . . . [and] underscores cruelty beyond the expected."[42] "The text emphasizes her helplessness by stating, 'He lay her,' not 'He lay *with* her,' omitting the preposition in describing the rape."[43] In doing so, the editor of this story names rape for what it is: a violent assault on an individual.

Even after the rape, Tamar is not silent. When Amnon's lust turns to hate and he tells her to "Arise, be gone" (2 Samuel 13:15), she pleads for him to not compound his atrocity with an act that is even worse. In her words "this evil in sending me away is greater than the other that thou didst unto me" (2 Samuel 13:16), Tamar wisely captures the reality of the situation. "Rape is a horrible act, but it can be a (nasty) way of acquiring wives, as the men of Benjamin acquired the girls dancing at Shiloh."[44] However, by defiling her and then casting her out, Amnon consigns her to a life of "desolation" (2 Samuel 13:20). Even banished, though, Tamar is not silent: "And Tamar put ashes on her head, and rent her garment of divers colours that was on her, and laid her hand on her head, and went on crying" (2 Samuel 13:19). Whether these acts were done in public or in private is not clear. Frymer-Kensky postulates that Tamar performs these actions publicly, in part, to proclaim that she is an innocent victim so that she cannot be held accountable for Absalom's actions.[45] In a situation where most rape victims retreat into silence and pain, Tamar becomes an even stronger role model if she does choose to "[create] a public spectacle," as Frymer-Kensky argues: "She draws attention to her own devastation by openly revealing her plight. Not trying to hide her shame, she performs an act of grief and lament."[46]

The individual who finally responds to Tamar's cries is her full brother Absalom. And while the text makes it clear that Absalom loves his sister, his words are not those that we as twenty-first-century readers want to hear: he charges Tamar to be silent. "And Absalom her brother said unto her, Hath Amnon thy brother been with thee?

but hold now thy peace, my sister: he is thy brother; regard not this thing. So Tamar remained desolate in her brother Absalom's house" (2 Samuel 13:20). With these words, Tamar disappears from the biblical narrative.

Many readers of the Bible may justifiably wonder why such a terrifying story has been preserved and why feminist scholars would want to bring it out of obscurity. What these scholars have shown, however, is the enormous value to be found in its retelling because, unfortunately, "Tamar is not an ancient anomaly. She is all around us."[47] The preservation of Tamar's story acknowledges the horrors that at times occur in families, even in families of high estimation. It gives voice to many of the issues that surround sexual abuse. For instance, Amnon only gains access to Tamar through the help of his cousin Jonadab and the unwitting assistance of his father, King David. As Wilda C. Gafney, professor of Hebrew Bible at Brite Divinity School, writes, "The specter of a family member enabling the sexual abuse of a relative is unfortunately a well-known and enduring phenomenon. . . . Sexual offenders are not all lone wolves. As the biblical account of Jonadab's collaboration illustrates, there are other family members, adults, who know that a child or woman or man is being abused. They say nothing or worse, they even participate."[48] Tamar's story also acknowledges the reality that the majority of rapes are acquaintance rapes in which victims know their assailants.[49]

Absalom's charge to his sister to be silent about the life-altering crime inflicted on her is a painful reminder of the culture of silence that has long surrounded rape and abuse. Victims of rape and abuse have all too often been pressured and shamed into silence. When they have spoken out, they have all too often been disbelieved, ostracized, and blamed. King David's decision to knowingly ignore Amnon's act of violence against Tamar and to eventually mourn the loss of Amnon's life rather than acknowledge Tamar's suffering is a terrifying example of an all too prevalent sanction of male violence upon female bodies (2 Samuel 13:36). Summarizing Tamar's story, Bellis writes: "There is no good news here, but the text invites and

encourages us to write a different ending to the story, where the parent takes action, the abuser is confronted, and the victim is heard and cared for. WE can write a better ending that chooses to listen rather than ignore, to offer grace and healing rather than shame."[50] Such abuse and violence must end. God does not sanction it in the Bible or in our current society.

The great power in Tamar's story is that it "provides a framework for women to talk about sexual violence, using its inclusion in the Scriptures as authority to discuss it in their own communities."[51] A powerful example of how Tamar's story is currently being used to raise awareness of sexual abuse and to work for its elimination is the Tamar Campaign. In South Africa, a mixed-gender group of theologians and clergy created Bible studies about Tamar's rape and other texts in the Bible that feature abuse to help churches address sexual violence by creating a space in which it may be openly discussed. The Bible studies are led by facilitators from the Ujamaa Center. The campaign has been so successful that it has spread to other countries within Africa and even to other continents.[52] The Bible studies begin with the group reading the text together and then asking a series of questions such as: What is this text about? Who are the male characters and what is the role of each of them in the rape of Tamar? What is Tamar's response throughout the story? What is the attitude of the narrator? Where is God in the story? The facilitator also asks a series of consciousness-raising questions such as What effect or impact does the story of Tamar have on you? Are there women like Tamar in your church or community? Tell their story. What resources are there in your area for survivors of rape? What will you now do in response to this Bible study?[53]

Reporting on the impact of the campaign on individuals in South Africa, Gerald West and Phumzile Zondi-Mabizela write, "In our experience the effects of this Bible study are substantial. Women are amazed that such a text exists, are angry that they have never heard it read or preached, are relieved to discover they are not alone, are empowered because the silence has been broken and their stories have

been told."[54] This statement encapsulates why it is important to make this text and other appalling texts such as the story of the Levite's concubine (Judges 19–21) and Jephthah's daughter (Judges 11) a part of our Sunday curriculum. These texts create a biblically sanctioned space to name and discuss abuse within a church setting, and it may give individuals the freedom and space they need to share their own stories and then to work toward recovery. Silence enables the continuation of abuse. Consequently, among the great benefits of feminist scholars' biblical interpretations is that their productive readings of dismaying texts help us to openly discuss modern challenges such as violence, abuse, and the exploitation of those who are marginalized and disadvantaged. Often their readings also reveal how God and the Bible editors are not sanctioning the violence found within the Old Testament; rather, these stories exist to be condemned and to show the need for a different way. Ideally our collective study of these stories will lead to our collective resolve to end abuse in all its varied forms.

The Women of Exodus

The women of Exodus provide intriguing examples of how individuals can work toward ending abuse and overcoming social injustices. The first deliverers to appear in the book of Exodus are Shiphrah and Puah, Hebrew midwives who may themselves be either Hebrew or Egyptian—the text is ambiguous.[55] Making an independent moral decision, the midwives defy Pharaoh's order that they kill all the male babies at their birth (Exodus 1:15–17). When questioned by Pharaoh about their failure to follow out his command, they cunningly play to his belief that the Hebrews are inherently different than the Egyptians: "the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women; for they are lively, and are delivered ere the midwives come in unto them" (Exodus 1:19). Believing their words because they reinforce his belief that the Hebrews are less human than the Egyptians and distinctly other, Pharaoh dismisses the midwives without punishment.[56] The

next deliverer in the book of Exodus is Moses's mother, Jochebed. Skirting around Pharaoh's decree that "every son that is born ye shall cast into the river" (Exodus 1:22), she hides her son for three months before placing him in an ark and floating him down the river under the watchful eye of her daughter, Miriam (Exodus 2:1–4). Fortuitously, the Pharaoh's daughter is the one who finds the ark and becomes the next deliverer within the story. Her initial statement, "This is one of the Hebrews' children" signals to the readers that she is aware of her father's decree and intentionally disobeys his order in favor of her emotional, ethical impulse—"she had compassion on him" (Exodus 2:6). Similar to Shiphrah, Puah, and Jochebed, Pharaoh's daughter refuses to carry out (or be complicit with) violence and the abuse of power. Acting in their roles as midwives, mothers, and daughters, these women do what is possible within their sphere to stop the abuses they encounter.

Speaking of the applicability of their actions for our world today, Japinga writes, "Resistance to oppression often begins in small actions. The enslaved Israelites did not have the power to defeat Pharaoh, but the midwives could save the boys and the mothers could save Moses. It is easy to be intimidated by slavery, apartheid, and segregation because these systems are so large and tenacious. They effectively demoralize and disempower people until they believe they are powerless, but sometimes when one person challenges the system, other people also refuse to be passive in the face of evil."[57] The domino effect of deliverance and the palpable impact of one individual within the book of Exodus should encourage each of us to work in whatever ways we can to end social injustices.

A crucial insight to come out of feminist readings of Exodus is how the women crossed gender, ethnic, and class lines to fight oppression and to save others. Moses is saved and the story of the Exodus unfolds because "Pharaoh's daughter is knowingly complicit (whether or not she knows that she is paying the child's mother to nurse him) with the Hebrew women in an act of cross-gender, cross-ethnic, cross-class deliverance."[58] The "theme of crossing ethnic boundaries

to effect deliverance makes its first appearance" in the ambiguity of the ethnic identity of the midwives.[59] As Jacqueline E. Lapsley, professor of Old Testament at Princeton Theological Seminary, notes, the "ambiguous (perhaps deliberately so?) . . . ethnic identity of these midwives . . . force[es] the reader to ponder the implications of identity: what difference does it make to the story whether the women are Hebrew or Egyptian?"[60] Whether or not the midwives crossed ethnic lines to save others is unknown, but what is known, although rarely mentioned, is that the Egyptian women crossed ethnic and class lines to aid the Israelite women as they fled into the wilderness by providing them with "jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment" (Exodus 3:22; 12:35). Women throughout the first three chapters of the book of Exodus crossed traditional division lines to defy oppression and to work for the liberation of others. They are models for us of President Nelson's call "to build bridges of cooperation instead of walls of segregation," "to lead out in abandoning attitudes and actions of prejudice, . . . [and] to promote respect for all of God's children"[61]

Challenging readers to think about how this story teaches the necessity of forming cooperate networks across traditional identity divisions, Lapsley writes, "What change might be wrought today if women of different racial, ethnic, and class backgrounds could find ways of working together in the life of the church and for the common good? . . . The deliverances effected by women in Exodus 1–4 are part of the work of God, and foreshadow the deliverance YHWH effects for Israel a few chapters later. To read Exodus 1–4 as Scripture is to read for the values the story embodies, to rejoice in the possibility of engaging in the work of God across the boundaries that separate us, and to acknowledge the challenge of it. Women who work together to protect the vulnerable and to defy violence do the work of God, and it is our work."[62] The book of Exodus, as Lapsley and other feminist and postcolonial scholars persuasively argue, is a clarion call for individuals to reject human prejudice centered on gender, ethnicity, and class and to work cooperatively for the liberation of all people.

Not surprisingly, many feminist scholars have also turned to the book of Exodus to illuminate how the text deconstructs a worldview where men are of greater worth than women to show instead a world where "women become the saviors of early Israel and bring on the redemption from Egypt."[63] By having Pharaoh promote the assumption that men are of greater consequence than women, through his repeated efforts to destroy the Hebrew sons and let the daughters live (Exodus 1:15–22), the text suggests this idea will need to be ridiculed and abandoned. The text effectively does this by showing that it is the women, not the men, who repeatedly undermine his plans in the first two chapters and enable the survival of Moses. As Gafney writes, "The liberation of the Israelite people in Egypt begins with Shiphrah and Puah."[64] Through careful analysis feminist scholars help readers appreciate the courageous women of Exodus who defied overwhelming power at great risk to themselves. They also bring to light the important truth that although great achievements have often been associated with one man, such as Moses and the Exodus, their achievements have actually been made possible through the efforts of many individuals—men and women—each doing his or her part to bring about change. Their efforts may remind us of the inspiring words of our past prophet, Gordon B. Hinckley: "This church does not belong to its President. Its head is the Lord Jesus Christ, whose name each of us has taken upon ourselves. We are all in this great endeavor together. We are here to assist our Father in His work and His glory. . . . Your obligation is as serious in your sphere of responsibility as is my obligation in my sphere. . . . All of us in the pursuit of our duty touch the lives of others. To each of us in our respective responsibilities the Lord has said: 'Wherefore, be faithful; stand in the office which I have appointed unto you; succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees' (Doctrine and Covenants 81:5). . . . The progress of this work will be determined by our joint efforts."[65]

Conclusion

The stories of women in the Old Testament have much to teach us if we will take the time to notice them and then to read with the female figures. This is accomplished as we ask new questions about the women, the story, and the context and as we seek to understand their struggles, choices, and situations. Doing so will not only foster regard and empathy for these women but will also help us recognize our shortcomings in our interactions with others and perhaps even our complicity in the social injustices that abound in our world today. As we then discuss these stories openly, we will create biblically sanctioned spaces to discuss difficult topics that otherwise remain in the shadows. The women discussed in this chapter serve only as a starting point to illustrate how much we can gain as we apply a feminist hermeneutic to our scripture study and learn from the many feminist scholars who have carefully set forth a wide range of readings on these biblical women. As we immerse ourselves in these studies, we will perceive a repeated call for us to recognize our responsibility to stand with victims and to fight oppression in all its many forms.

Notes

7. Frances Taylor Gench, *Back to the Well: Women's Encounters with Jesus in the Gospels* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 81.
8. Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, "Feminist Perspective on the Bible and Theology: An Introduction to Selected Issues and Literature," *Interpretation* 42, no. 1 (January 1988): 5–6.
9. "What Is the Church's Stance on Feminism?" *New Era*, January 2020, 43.
10. To date, Latter-day Saint scholars have rarely incorporated the work of feminist biblical scholars into their readings of Old Testament women. An example of an exception to this statement would be Gaye Strathearn's work on the book of Ruth in this volume. Currently, the best work on Old Testament women from a Latter-day Saint scholar is Camille Fronk Olson's *Women of the Old Testament* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2009).

Olson's work provides useful context for understanding Old Testament women and provides many helpful insights on each of the women she discusses. Her work suggests an awareness of some of the ideas to come out of feminist biblical scholarship, although she does not cite them directly. Her suggested sources (and writing as a whole) indicate a preference for scholars who do not identify as feminist exegetes.

11. Phyllis Trible, "If the Bible's So Patriarchal, How Come I Love It?," *Bible Review* 8, no. 5 (October 1992): 45.
12. Trible, "If the Bible's So Patriarchal," 55.
13. Alice Ogden Bellis, *Helpmates, Harlots, and Heroes: Women's Stories in the Hebrew Bible*, 2nd ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 19.
14. Gench, *Back to the Well*, xii–xiii.
15. Gench, *Back to the Well*, xii.
16. Phyllis Trible, "Depatriarchalizing in Biblical Interpretation," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 41, no. 1 (March 1973): 48.
17. Dallin H. Oaks, "Scripture Reading and Revelation," *Ensign*, January 1995, 8.
18. Trible, "Depatriarchalizing," 48.
19. Though Abraham's name is Abram and Sarah's name is Sarai at the beginning of the narrative, I use the names Abraham and Sarah throughout my analysis. The Lord does not change their names until after Hagar bears Ishmael.
20. Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, *Just Wives? Stories of Power and Survival in the Old Testament and Today* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 14.
21. All scriptures quoted are from the King James Version of the Bible, unless otherwise specified.
22. "Evidence from ancient texts show that this arrangement [surrogacy], although not common, was once a regular feature of family relations. Three ancient Near Eastern marriage contracts stipulate that should the bride be barren after a specified number of years, she will give her husband her slave. . . . The best known example of surrogacy is in the laws of Hammurabi. . . . Neither Sarai, who proposes Hagar, nor Abram, who agrees, mentions obtaining the consent of the slave girl. To contemporary

readers, such consent seems necessary for the arrangement to be moral. But none of the ancient texts see any ethical problem with this arrangement." Tikva Frymer-Kensky, *Reading the Women of the Bible: A New Interpretation of Their Stories* (New York: Random House, 2002), 227.

23. The King James Version of the Bible indicates that Pharaoh had not yet taken Sarah to wife: "Why saidst thou, She is my sister? so I might have taken her to me to wife" (Genesis 12:19). The much more prevalent translation is some variant of "and I took her to me to wife," found in the NIV, NLV, ESV, ISV, ASV, and so forth. This translation indicates that the Pharaoh had already taken Sarah to wife, although whether that included sexual relations is unknown. A further indication in the text that the Pharaoh may have had sexual relations with Sarai comes from comparing this account to the other account when Sarah again poses as Abraham's sister and is taken by Abimelech king of Gerar as well as the account when Rebekah poses as Isaac's sister when they are in the land of Gerar. In both of these other accounts the author specifically makes it known that Sarah and Rebekah have not been sexually taken: "But Abimelech had not come near [Sarah]" (Genesis 20:4). And in the case of Rebekah, when the king realizes Rebekah is Isaac's wife, he proclaims, "What is this thou hast done unto us? one of the people might lightly have lien with thy wife, and thou shouldest have brought guiltiness upon us" (Genesis 26:10). That no specific denial of the Pharaoh having sexual relations with Sarah occurs in the text leaves open the possibility that he did. One must hope as Latter-day Saint scholar Hugh Nibley suggested that the Lord saved Sarah by sending an angel, as he had earlier saved Abraham from being sacrificed on the altar by the priest of Elkenah. Hugh Nibley, *Old Testament and Related Studies* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1986), 99.
24. Margaret Beissinger as cited in Susan Niditch, "Folklore, Feminism, and the Ambiguity of Power: Women's Voice in Genesis?" in *Faith and Feminism: Ecumenical Essays*, ed. B. Diane Lipsett and Phyllis Trible (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), 56.
25. Niditch, "Folklore," 57.

26. Walter Brueggemann, editor's foreword to *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives*, by Phyllis Trible (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), x.
27. Trible, *Texts of Terror*, 3.
28. Russell M. Nelson, "Building Bridges," *New Era*, August 2018, 6; Russell M. Nelson "Let God Prevail," *Ensign*, November 2020, 94. See also the recent changes to the *General Handbook*, 38.6.14, "Prejudice": "The Church calls on all people to abandon attitudes and actions of prejudice toward any group or individual. . . . This includes prejudice based on race, ethnicity, nationality, tribe, gender, age, disability, socioeconomic status, religious belief or nonbelief, and sexual orientation."
29. See, for example, commentary on Genesis 16:4 by John Calvin (1578) and Peter Pett (2011). "And, doubtless, from the event, we may form a judgment that Hagar was impelled to flee, not so much by the cruelty of her mistress, as by her own contumacy. Her own conscience accused her; and it is improbable that Sarai should have been so greatly incensed, except by many, and, indeed atrocious offenses. Therefore, the woman being of servile temper, and of indomitable ferocity, chose rather to flee, than to return to favor, through the humble acknowledgment of her fault" (Calvin). "Hagar cannot accept her new lack of status or her treatment and flees in the direction of Egypt, her homeland. In many ways she had given Sarai little choice. (One of the things that is said to cause the earth to tremble is 'a handmaid who is heir to her mistress' (Proverbs 30:23)). Her attempt to supplant her had had to be treated harshly in order to re-establish Sarai's overt authority. Of course her flight exacerbates her wrongdoing. She has no right to leave the tribe and she has not been turned out" (Pett, https://www.studylight.org/commentary/genesis/16–6.html).
30. "Net Notes" Genesis 16:6, note 24. https://netbible.org/bible/Genesis+16.
31. Carol Meyers *Rediscovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 200.
32. Meyers, *Rediscovering Eve*, 120–21.
33. Tikva Frymer-Kensky, *Reading the Women of the Bible: A New Interpretation of Their Stories* (New York: Random House, 2002), 235.
34. Frymer-Kensky, *Reading the Women*, 236.

35. Although Ishmael is most often depicted as a young child in paintings of Hagar and Ishmael in the wilderness, the text makes it clear that he is likely around seventeen years old. In Genesis 17:25, the text states that Ishmael is thirteen years old when the Lord tells Abraham that Sarah will have a son. That likely puts Ishmael at fourteen years old when Isaac is born. Ishmael remains in the household until Isaac was weaned—an event that likely occurred when Isaac was three, making Ishmael seventeen.
36. See, for instance, Elsa Tamez's reading of this in "The Woman Who Complicated the History of Salvation," *Cross Currents* 36, no. 2 (Summer 1986): 137.
37. A womanist is a black feminist or feminist of color. Womanism seeks to bring the history and everyday experiences of black women to bear upon theological, ethical, biblical, and other religious studies.
38. Delores S. Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk* (1993; repr., Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2013), 5.
39. Sakenfeld, *Just Wives?*, 22.
40. Jeffrey R. Holland, "High Priest of Good Things to Come," *Ensign*, November 1999, 38.
41. Lynn Japinga, *Preaching the Women of the Old Testament: Who They Were and Why They Matter* (1988; repr., Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2017), 16.
42. Renita J. Weems, *Just a Sister Away: A Womanist Vision of Women's Relationships in the Bible* (New York: Hachette Book Group, 2005), 2.
43. Amnon is the firstborn and heir apparent to the throne. The second-born, Kileab or Chileab, isn't mentioned. Perhaps he died young. Absalom is the third born. Tamar's story occurs in the section of the Bible generally understood to depict the contestation over who will assume David's throne. A number of years after Tamar's rape, Absalom will seek to take over David's throne (2 Samuel 13–19).
44. Alice L. Laffey, *An Introduction to the Old Testament: A Feminist Perspective* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 124.
45. Phyllis Trible, "Tamar: The Royal Rape of Wisdom," in *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 37–64.

46. Translation from Greek by Frymer-Kensky, *Women of the Bible*, 159.
47. Frymer-Kensky, *Women of the Bible*, 158–59.
48. Trible "Tamar," 46; see also Frymer-Kensky, *Women of the Bible*, 162; and Wilda C. Gafney, *Womanist Midrash: A Reintroduction to the Women of the Torah and the Throne* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2017), 229.
49. Gafney, *Womanist Midrash*, 229. As Trible further explains, "now 'he lay (skb)' not, however, with her because the Hebrew omits the preposition to stress his brutality" ("Tamar," 46). To understand the verb *shakav*, Trible refers her readers to J. P. Fokkelman, *King David*, vol. 1, Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel (Assen, The Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1981), 104–5.
50. Frymer-Kensky, *Women of the Bible*, 164.
51. In Deuteronomy 22:22–24 we learn that a woman who cries out when she is being violated is considered innocent. If she does not, she is considered complicit. Likewise, Frymer-Kensky quotes a Middle Assyrian law that states, "If, as soon as she leaves the house, she should declare that she has been the victim of fornication, they shall release her, she is clear" (*Women of the Bible*, 165). If she does not do this, Amnon might be able to claim that Tamar seduced him or that she was a willing partner.
52. Frymer-Kensky, *Women of the Bible*, 165.
53. Bellis, *Helpmates, Harlots, and Heroes*, 153.
54. Gafney, *Womanist Midrash*, 228, 232.
55. RAINN, "8 out of 10 rapes are committed by someone known to the victim." https://rainn.org/statistics/perpetrators-sexual-violence.
56. Bellis *Helpmates, Harlots, and Heroes*, 135
57. Gafney, *Womanist Midrash*, 232.
58. Johonna McCants, "The Tamar Campaign: Breaking the Silence on Violence against Women," *Peace Signs: The Magazine of the Peace and Justice Support Network Mennonite Church USA*, March 27, 2014, https://pjsnpeacesigns.wordpress.com/2014/03/27/the-tamar-campaign-breaking-the-silence-on-violence-against-women/.
59. Fred Nyabera and Taryn Montgomery, eds., *Contextual Bible Study Manual on Gender-Based Violence* (the Fellowship of Christian Councils

and Churches in the Great Lakes and The Horn of Africa: Nairobi, Kenya, 2007), http://lottcarey.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Tamar_Campaign_Contextual-Bible-Study-on-Gender-Based-Violence-Final.pdf.

60. Gerald West and Phumzile Zondi-Mabizela, "The Bible Story That Became a Campaign: The Tamar Campaign in South Africa (and Beyond)," *Ministerial Formation* (July 2004): 6, http://ujamaa.ukzn.ac.za/Files/the%20bible%20story.pdf.
61. Scholars are not certain about the ethnic identity of the midwives because "the Hebrew *lmldt h 'bryt* is ambiguous: it could mean 'to the Hebrew midwives' or 'to the midwives who serve the Hebrew women.'" Frymer-Kensky, *Women of the Bible*, 25.
62. For more on the role that the assumption of difference plays in the story, see Renita Weems, "'The Hebrew Women Are Not Like the Egyptian Women: The Ideology of Race, Gender and Sexual Reproduction in Exodus 1," *Semeia* 59 (1992): 25–34.
63. Japinga, *Preaching the Women*, 50.
64. Jacqueline E. Lapsley, *Whispering the Word: Hearing Women's Stories in the Old Testament* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 77.
65. Lapsley, *Whispering the Word*, 72.
66. Lapsley, *Whispering the Word*, 72.
67. Nelson, "Building Bridges," 6; Nelson "Let God Prevail," 94.
68. Lapsley, *Whispering the Word*, 88.
69. Frymer-Kensky, *Reading the Women*, 24.
70. Gafney, *Womanist Midrash*, 91.
71. Gordon B. Hinckley, "This Is the Work of the Master," *Ensign*, May 1995, 71.