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READING EXODUS 3:7-10 FROM AN EGYPTIAN PERSPECTIVE

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# Chapter One

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Research Background

I am a contemporary Egyptian reader of the Old Testament (OT); and I am also the Evangelical Theological Seminary of Cairo's (ETSC's) OT scholar. In both of these roles, I have observed a big gap between the reader and the OT in the Egyptian church today. Nowadays, some Egyptians do not read the OT at all, or they choose only specific parts from it. The purpose of this thesis is to reclaim the OT for the Egyptian church.

As an Egyptian reader and Egyptian OT scholar, I find some difficulties with the OT that are specific to my Egyptian context. From my perspective, I think that there are four difficulties. First, the OT mostly portrays Egypt and the Egyptians with a negative image. For example, Egypt was the “house of slavery,” and the Egyptians were “slave drivers.” (e.g. Exod. 13:3; Deut. 5:6; Jer. 34:13). In fact, the OT includes divine judgments, signs, and oracles against Egypt and Egyptians (e.g. Isa. 19, 20:3; Jer. 25:19, Ezek. 29:1-16).<sup>1</sup> Second, because the Egyptians are Arabs, the Arab-Israeli political conflict complicates how Arab Christians understand the OT. Some Arabs see the OT as an exclusively Jewish book or a political Zionist text.<sup>2</sup> The Egyptians have come to think that the Israeli political project includes not just the land of Palestine, but also the Egyptian land, “On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, “To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates.” (Gen. 15:18).<sup>3</sup> Hence, the Egyptian Christians have come to think that if they use the OT, they are supporting the Israeli political project. Third, the Egyptian Christians are a minority (11%) among the Islamic majority (88%),<sup>4</sup> so they read the OT from a minority perspective. In other words, The Christian reader reads the OT from a perspective of oppression because she/he has been oppressed by the Muslim majority and by many radical Islamic movements in the Middle

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<sup>1</sup> H. Ringgren, “מִצְרַיִם miṣrayim,” *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* 8 (1997), 519-532, 528-530.

<sup>2</sup> Nāim Stifan Ateek, *Justice, and Only Justice: A Palestinian Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1989), 77.

<sup>3</sup> All Scripture quotations in this thesis were taken from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), except the translation that I made by my own for Exodus 3: 7-10 in chapter three.

<sup>4</sup> The other groups are 1%.

East. Also, he/she is suffering under the terrible economic, political, religious, psychological, and social conditions in the Middle East. In addition, Muslim writers have been aggressively criticizing the OT as the book of Jews, which is causing embarrassment to Christian Arabs. For these reasons, some churches have stopped using the OT in general worship, or read it from a minority perspective. Fourth, for a long time, Egyptian Christians have been struggling with an identity conflict: the political identity of belonging to Egypt, and the religious identity of belonging to the faith history of Israel. From the dawn of Egyptian history, religious identity has been very important for Egyptians. Before the January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2011 and June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2013 revolutions, the persecution of the minority by the majority asserted the religious identity. After the two revolutions, the Christians disappointed because they played a big roles in the two revolutions, and the result was an increased persecution. This increase has made the religious identity of the Christians even more complicated. On one hand, Christians, as a persecuted minority in Egypt, find themselves relating to the ancient Israelites in the paradigm of God's oppressed people in the OT. On the other hand, after the two revolutions, the sense of nationalism was asserted strongly on the Egyptian political identity among Egyptians. Thus, for the last seven years, Egyptian Christians have been struggling with this conflict identity. When experiencing persecution, they feel that they are close to the situation of Israeli people in Egypt. At other times, the normal time they feel deeply their Egyptian nationalism.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, in the light of the negative image of Egypt in the OT, the Arab-Israeli conflict, being an oppressed minority, and their identity conflict, how can Egyptian Christians read the OT? The studies that may answer this question are rare. This lack of direct teaching has resulted in historical, theological, exegetical, social, psychological, and cultural gap between the reader and the OT. This gap is forming an Egyptian attitude that the OT is too difficult exegetically and hermeneutically for contemporary Egyptian readers.

As ETSC's OT scholar, I am aware of this attitude and this gap. Thus, I would like to study and investigate these difficulties, and hope to find a good solution that will build a bridge between the Egyptian reader and the OT. From my experience as an Egyptian reader of the OT, there are many passages that may have been challenging the Egyptian reader. In this research, I chose Exodus 3:7-10 as a case study because it is a key passage that contains the problems I have

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<sup>5</sup> Safwat Marzouk, *Egypt As a Monster in the Book of Ezekiel* (Tübingen : Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 11.

identified. First, the author<sup>6</sup> of Exodus 3:7-10 uses the term “Egypt” four times, and the text portrays Egypt and Egyptians with a negative image. Second, the text explains the personal and national relationship between God and Israel in such a way that Egyptians have thought that the OT is a Jewish book. Third, it is a key passage for the land problem, which is the reason behind the Arab-Israeli conflict, and thus the reason Egyptians think of the OT as a political Zionist text. Fourth, this text reflects the double identity conflict of the Egyptian Christians. On the one hand, the Egyptian Christians share a religious identity as part of Israel’s history in the exodus event. On the other hand, they also share in Egyptian identity as part of Egypt’s history in this same event. This produces a big conflict inside the Egyptian Christian reader as to on which ground he/she should read this text. Finally, the Egyptian Christian is suffering as a minority among the majority, as the Israelites did. Because this text has been used by the people who were oppressed, it has become the main source of “Liberation Theology,” “Theology of Liberation,” “Minorities Theology,” “African Theology,” and “Black Theology.”

Thus, in the Egyptian context, Exodus 3:7-10 is an extremely complex text, both exegetically and hermeneutically. For this reason, I did fieldwork in Egypt to study how Egyptian Christians interpret and understand this text. My informants confirm my previous claim that this text challenges them in different ways. In addition, they gave me many hermeneutical-critical ideas about the text. I will expand on these ideas later, but now; I would like to start with the research question that was generated from: my experience as an OT scholar, these difficulties, and the opinions of the informants as Egyptian readers.

## **1.2 Research Question**

From an Egyptian perspective, all the previous issues related to the text are important, and reflect exegetical and hermeneutical dilemmas. Thus, I thought that I may be able to collect all of them in one question. From my viewpoint, all these problems are as the rays of sun, I would like my question to be as the lens that collects the sun's rays together. Thus, the question is, how Exodus 3: 7-10 can be read from a conscious Egyptian perspective, exegetically with regard to the role of Egypt in this text and in the OT, and hermeneutically with regard to the role of the text for contemporary Egyptian readers.

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<sup>6</sup> Every time, I use “the author of Exodus” that means “the author/authors/editors of Exodus.”



In this thesis, I would like to bring together the exegetical analysis, the hermeneutical issues, and an Egyptian perspective on the text in order to reach my conclusion. In other words, I would like to examine the research question through an exegetical-hermeneutical analysis from a uniquely Egyptian perspective. I am mainly interested in the role of Egypt in this text and the role of the text for Egyptian contemporary readers. After that, I will be able to answer my research question and build a bridge between the Egyptian reader and the text. Finally, I will use the text to formulate an Egyptian liberation theology for the Christian minority that is suffering in Egypt.

### 1.3 Research Methods

I agree with Justin S. Ukpong that “Interpreting a text is a complex process.”<sup>7</sup> Scholars use many academic tools, such as “theories,” “methods,” and “modes” to help in this complex process of interpretation. On the one hand, as a scholarly reader, I would like to read this text critically. On the other hand, however, as an Egyptian reader, I would like to read this text with the eyes of the ordinary Egyptian reader. I think that there are three modes that can help me to achieve both types of reading at once. The three modes are, “behind the text,” “in the text or the text itself,” and “in front of the text.”<sup>8</sup> I believe that the three modes cover many different aspects of the text as Gerald West explains:

The first mode of reading emphasizes what is *behind the text* of the Bible because it is primarily interested in the historical and sociological world lies behind the text and from which the text comes. The second mode of reading emphasizes what is *in the text* of the Bible because it is primarily interested in the literary world of *the text itself*. And the third mode of reading emphasizes what is *in front of the text* of the Bible because it is primarily interested in the major metaphors, themes, and symbols that are projected by the text.<sup>9</sup>

In order to answer the thesis’ question, I have divided it into two questions. The first is: how Exodus 3: 7-10 can be read from the conscious Egyptian perspective, exegetically with regard to the role of Egypt in this text and in the OT? This question tracks the exegetical analysis that will mostly cover the three modes of reading the text by historical critical method and

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<sup>7</sup> Justin S. Ukpong, “Rereading the Bible with African Eyes Inculturation and Hermeneutics,” *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* (91 Jun 1995, p 3-14).

URL:<http://web.b.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=321307ab-8f21-4c0b-888c6b94886e6ca8%40sessionmgr101&vid=11&hid=115> (Accessed 2 February, 2017).

<sup>8</sup> Gerald West, *Contextual Bible Study* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 1993), 8, 26- 27.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, 27-28.

literary critical method. The second question that is: how Exodus 3: 7-10 can be read from a conscious Egyptian perspective, hermeneutically with regard to the role of the text for the contemporary Egyptian reader? This question looks forward to the hermeneutical analysis that emphasizes the third mode “in front the text” by use of the context criticism method. I will bring together the two approaches, the exegetical and hermeneutical, to answer the thesis’ question. In addition, I would like my thesis to move from “the performance of exegeses” to “the utilization of exegesis”<sup>10</sup> In other words, I would like my thesis to be fruitful for the church through employing it for doing theology.<sup>11</sup> Hence, I will be able to use the liberation message of the text to formulate an Egyptian liberation theology. I will explain that in the following chapter.

#### **1.4 Research Sources**

The thesis’ data are collected from exegetical and hermeneutical sources. The exegetical sources cover two different levels, “primary sources” and “secondary sources.”<sup>12</sup> The primary sources are *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*<sup>13</sup> and other Bible versions in English and Arabic. The secondary sources are books, studies, interpretations, commentaries, theses, articles, lexicons, dictionaries, and encyclopedias of the OT that written by other researchers that analyze my primary sources. The hermeneutical sources also cover two different levels, “primary sources” and “secondary sources.” The primary sources are the empirical data that collected during my fieldwork in Egypt. The secondary sources are books, articles, and studies that written by other researchers that analyze my primary sources.<sup>14</sup> I will explain this in the theoretical chapter.

#### **1.5 Research Context**

In chapter two, I will return to the research discourse, but here I am interested in my context as researcher. According to the title, this thesis examines the question: how Exodus 3:7-10 can be read from a conscious Egyptian perspective? Thus, this question has double context. The first context is “scholar readers,” or “the trained readers” those who read the Bible “critically”

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<sup>10</sup> John H. Hayes and Carl R. Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's Handbook* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1987), 142.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, 146.

<sup>12</sup> Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 25.

<sup>13</sup> Albrecht Alt, *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1977).

<sup>14</sup> Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (2007), 25-27.

because they have had formal biblical and theological studies or training.<sup>15</sup> The second context is, “the ordinary readers” those who read the Bible “pre-critically” because they have not any formal biblical and theological studies or biblical training. There are different historical, cultural, political, literal, theological, and social backgrounds between “the trained readers” and “the ordinary readers.”<sup>16</sup> Consequently, these different backgrounds produce historical, cultural, political, literal, theological, and social gaps between both. In fact, in the Christian or Jewish communities, we can realize that these gaps are growing with time. Thus, I am aware that the two contexts are different in almost every aspect. In the section about the exegetical processes, I will present the scholars’ context for the trained readers. Because I also need to explain the Egyptian contemporary context, I will do that in the following paragraphs.

The Egyptian perspective is the perspective of Christians who live in Egypt;<sup>17</sup> it can also be called the Coptic perspective.<sup>18</sup> From my viewpoint as an Evangelical Coptic reader, I believe that the context of the Egyptian Christian reader is an Islamic-Arabic-Middle Eastern context.

First, the Egyptian Christian context is being a minority (11%) among an Islamic majority (88%). Islamic persecution of the Christianity has a long history; it started when Islam came to Egypt (639-640 A.C). In the modern time, since 1982, the Islamic majority has been causing tension, conflicts, and dramatic violence toward the Christian minority.<sup>19</sup>

Second, the Egyptian Christian reader is an Arabic Christian. Many Westerners tend to think that the term “Arab” is a synonymous with to be “a Muslim,” but the Arabs became Christians before the rise of Islam in the 7<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>20</sup> Thus, the term of “Arabic Christian” refers to the Christians who speak Arabic in the Middle East. Thus, the Egyptian Christians belong to an Arab identity, and have been affected by the Arab-Israeli conflict. This conflict is causing

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<sup>15</sup> West, *Contextual Bible Study* (1993), 8, 26.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Christianity started in Egypt from the first century. According to the book of Acts (2: 10), there were people from Egypt who received Peter’s message on the day of Pentecost. According to the Christian tradition, St. Mark came to Alexandria, and established the Egyptian Church. Nowadays, there are three main churches: the Coptic Orthodox Church, the Evangelical Church, and the Catholic Church.

<sup>18</sup>The term Copt/Qopt/قبط or Coptic/Qoptic/قبطي means Egyptian/مصري. For more information: Jill Kamil, *Coptic Egypt: History and Guide Revised Edition* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2000), xv.

<sup>19</sup> For more information: Ephriam Yacoub, *Conflicts Between Christian and Muslims in Egypt since 1980: Christian Perspective on Being a Minority in Egypt* (Stavanger: Master’s Thesis, School of Mission and Theology, 2011), 5-9, 12.

<sup>20</sup> Ateek, *Justice, and Only Justice* (1989), 15.

embarrassment for Arabic Christians, especially after the wars of 1948, 1956, 1967, and 1973. In addition, the Muslims have come to think that Israel is the enemy of Arabs. Since the OT thought to be a Jewish book, some Arab Muslims may think that if Christians read the OT, the book of the Arabs' enemy, the Christians support the enemy of the Arabs. Hence, some Muslims may see Christians as betrayers. As a result of that political reason, some Arab Christians have avoided reading the OT for decades. The political issues have made a historical, theological, linguistic, and cultural gap between the Arab Christian and the OT.

Finally, the Egyptian Christian reader lives in the Middle East as a minority among many Islamic radical movements that have oppressed him/her. In addition, he/she is suffering under the terrible economic, political, religious, psychological, and social situations of the Middle East.

## **1.6 Research Scope and Limitation**

From my perspective, Exod. 3:7-10 is a significant text because it has become the main biblical source of inspiration for pursuing political, economic, spiritual, social, and poverty liberation in many contexts. It is also used as a main reference for many liberation theologies. In addition, it is a major text that is used by the minorities in the entire world to demand their rights. Thus, the scope of the text is very wide, and the text is rich with many complex meanings and issues. Thus, in this thesis, I will focus on Exod. 3:7-10 as a biblical-exegetical-hermeneutical study, and I will limit the scope to the Egyptian Christian context. The intended audience is Egyptian Christians. Hence, I attempt to keep a balance between an academic writing style, and language that is easily understandable for Egyptian readers.

## **1.7 Research Plan**

This research paper comprises five chapters that will achieve the following purposes. Chapter one, the introduction, deals with introductory matters, such as background, the research question, the methodology and sources, scope and limitation, and the research plan. Chapter two, the theoretical considerations, will develop exegetical and hermeneutical theory. Chapter three, exegetical analysis, looks for the exegetical analysis of the text. Chapter four, hermeneutical analysis, will trace the hermeneutical analysis of the text. The final chapter draws together the

findings and the conclusions from the all previous chapters as the lens that collects the sun's rays together.

## Chapter Two

### THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

#### 2.1 Introduction

This study traces the question of how Exodus 3: 7-10 can be read from a conscious Egyptian perspective, exegetically with regard to the role of Egypt in this text and in the OT, and hermeneutically with regard to the role of the text for Egyptian contemporary reader. Thus, the two pillars of this thesis are an exegetical analysis and hermeneutical analysis that will study the text from different aspects: “behind the text,” “in the text, within the text, or the text itself,” and “in front of the text.”<sup>21</sup> Thus, this chapter will deal with the academic tools that draw the path of the research, and why they are selected. Before, I present exegetical theory and hermeneutical theory; I must address a basic question about the Egyptian identity. Hence, this chapter consists of three main sections: The first one deal with the “identity” of the Egyptian biblical scholarship, the second looks forward to shape the exegetical theory, and the third looks forward to form the hermeneutical theory.

#### 2.2 Egyptian Biblical Scholarship and the Question of Identity

To speak about “Egyptian” biblical scholarship raises a question of identity. Does it belong to African biblical studies or to Arabian/Middle Eastern biblical studies? I think that this debate is related to another debate about whether Christianity in Egypt belongs to African or to Arabian/Middle Eastern Christianity. These two debates derived from the broader debate as to whether Egypt is an African or an Arabic country. I believe that Egypt is both, and thus that the identity of the Egyptian biblical scholarship is both African and Arabian/Middle Eastern.

On the one hand, Egyptian biblical studies are African for several reasons. First, Egypt belongs to Africa by its geographical location, natural resources. Second, Egypt and Africa share common historical relationship and cultural elements from a long history because many parts of Africa belonged to Egypt in both ancient and modern times. Third, the Egyptian church founded some African churches in Ethiopia and Sudan, and the Egyptian church has sent many missions

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<sup>21</sup> West, *Contextual Bible Study* (1993), 27.

to African countries such as Ethiopia, Sudan, and Kenya. Four, this relationship with Africa has a long history before Egypt became an Islamic country (641 A.D) and before Arabic became the language of Egyptians (700 A.D). Finally, the Orthodox Church identifies itself as a “Coptic” Church, which means Egyptian church. Thus, it does not identify itself Arabic Church.<sup>22</sup>

On the other hand, Egyptian biblical scholarship also belongs to Arabian/Middle Eastern Christianity. Geographically and culturally, Egypt is the center of the Arabia/Middle Eastern area. What’s more, the common cultural such as the Arabic language connect Egypt with Arabian/Middle Eastern Christianity. In addition, Egypt has played an active role in the region: political, cultural, theological, and social life throughout its history.<sup>23</sup> Additionally, the Middle East/Arabia was the center of Christianity for a long part of church history, and the Egyptian Church played essential roles through its school, church fathers, and heritage. Finally, Arab theologians and interpreters influenced Egyptian biblical interpreters during the period of Islamic rule that very fit into the context of the Middle East from the ninth century until the thirteenth century. I believe that the Arabic interpreters created a biblical approach for the encounter between the Bible and the Quran. For example, interpreters such as Ibn al-Tayyib (980-1043), wrote commentaries for the whole Bible using the Quranic languages, stories, names, and terms for to exegete the Bible.

I believe that African biblical scholarship and Arabian/Middle Eastern biblical scholarship converge in Egyptian biblical scholarship. For that reason, Egyptian biblical scholarship has become rich and unique. Thus, the identity of Egyptian biblical scholarship is African-Arabian. Thus, in this thesis, I would like to use both African biblical studies and Arabian/Middle Eastern biblical studies. Still, I may focus more on the African scholarship because there are other Egyptian researchers who focus more on the Arabic scholarship.

### **2.3 Exegetical Theory**

I believe that we can talk about two types of exegesis: “general exegesis” and “special exegesis.” General exegesis is a human natural ability. In every day of our lives, we practice exegesis when

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<sup>22</sup> J. A. (Bobby) Loubser, “How al-Mokatam Mountain Was Moved: the Coptic Imagination and the Christian Bible,” Gerald O. West and Musa W. Dube (ed.), *The Bible in Africa: Transactions, Trajectories, and Trends* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 103-126, 103-104.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

we try to understand the meaning when we hear or read any communication.<sup>24</sup> Special exegesis is a biblical scholarship tool. According to G. Schneider in *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, the word “exegesis,” derived from the Greek term “exēgeomai/ἐξηγέομαι” which occurs six times in the NT (Luke 24:35; John 1:18; Acts 10:8, 15:12,14, 21:19), means “to tell, relate, and report.”<sup>25</sup> The noun may refer to “explanation, interpretation, or relation.”<sup>26</sup> Hence, biblical exegesis is a discipline that seeks to understand the text and its communications through many processes and questions.<sup>27</sup> Thus, I agree with John Hayes and Carl Holladay that exegesis is both a regular daily human activity, and a biblical discipline.<sup>28</sup>

The task of biblical exegesis is a better understanding of the text and its communications. For that purpose, I would like to shape an exegetical theory and use it to exegete Exod. 3:7-10. There are many methods, tools, or modes that assist biblical scholars to build exegetical theories. The methodological approaches have had a long history through the first 4<sup>th</sup> centuries A.C., by two main schools of interpretation: “the Alexandrian Theological School” that adopted the allegorical approach, and “the Antiochian Theological School” that propagated the typological and historical approach. Since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, there were many theological, cultural, social, political, and scientific developments in European society that produced many methods of studying the Bible. These methods flourished in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and they expanded in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries as Louis C Jonker and Douglas G. Lawrie argue.<sup>29</sup> Thus, there are various approaches that can be used to study the text. I think that there are two methods appropriate for exegetical theory: historical criticism and literary criticism. There will be more focus on the historical critical method because it is the main approach. However, I don’t insist they are only correct methods, but that they are appropriate to my research. I agree with Barton who argues that “much harm has been done in biblical studies by insisting that there is, somewhere, a ‘correct’ method which, if only we could find it, would unlock the mysteries of the text.”<sup>30</sup> According to Barton, the question about “the correct method” cannot succeed because, “it tries to

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<sup>24</sup> Hayes and Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis* (1987), 5.

<sup>25</sup> G. Schneider, “ἐξηγέομαι,” *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* 2 (2000), 6, 6.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Hayes and Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis* (1987), 5.

<sup>29</sup> Louis C Jonker, and Douglas G. Lawrie, *Fishing for Jonah (Anew): Various Approaches to Biblical Interpretation* (Stellenbosch: Sun Press, 2005), 17.

<sup>30</sup> John Barton, *Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 5.



process the text, rather than to read it.” In addition, he explains: “Reading the Old Testament, with whatever aim in view, belongs to the humanities and cannot operate with an idea of watertight, correct method.”<sup>31</sup> I will explain the two methods in the following sections.

### 2.3.1 Historical Criticism

Historical criticism is one of the diverse methods that have roots from the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>32</sup> It is a mainstream method in western biblical studies from the 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> centuries as Knut Holter argues. Holter also argues that historical-criticism is a mainstream method in African biblical studies, especially, since 1960.<sup>33</sup> In the following paragraphs, I will briefly survey, what historical-critical method is and why I choose this method.

What is the historical critical method? The purpose of exegesis is reaching the meaning of the text. I agree with Angelika Berlejung that, “the exegete attempts to disclose the meaning of the text reflected in both its historical development and its theological relevance, in order to penetrate its depth and to understand it.”<sup>34</sup> Thus, historical progress and theological significance are two sides of one coin. Hence, historical criticism focuses on “the history behind the text” as Ukpong explains: “historical criticism focuses on the history behind the biblical text and uses the historical tools of research.”<sup>35</sup> I quite agree with Ukpong’s definition because he limited the approach in to the history “behind” the text only. But, what about the history “within/in” the text? Angelika Berlejung offers a good description:

The historical-critical method places special value on separating the textual layers, clarifying questions of dating, and placing the text and its (re-)constructed stages and their compilations in their appropriate intellectual, cultural and social-historical context, and, if possible, relating them to particular historical events.<sup>36</sup>

In the light of Berlejung’s definition, there is an important question that can raise here, what is the meaning of the particular history of the text? I believe with many scholars that the

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Justin S. Ukpong, “Can African Old Testament Scholarship Escape the Historical Critical Approach?” *Newsletter on African Old Testament Scholarship* 7 (1996- 2006), 1-16, 2.

<sup>33</sup> Knut Holter, “The Role of Historical-Critical Methodology in African Old Testament Studies,” *Old Testament Essays*, 24, no. 2 (2011): 377-389, 377-378.

<sup>34</sup> Angelika Berlejung et al, *T&T Clark Handbook of the Old Testament: An Introduction to the Literature, Religion and History of the Old Testament*. trans., Thomas Riplinger (London: T&T Clark International, 2012), 32.

<sup>35</sup> Ukpong, “Can African Old Testament Scholarship Escape the Historical Critical Approach?” (1996-2006), 2.

<sup>36</sup> Berlejung, *T&T Clark Handbook of the Old Testament* (2012), 32-33.

history of the text means two aspects: the history “behind” the text and the history “within/in” the text. First, the history “behind” the text as Ukpong argues,<sup>37</sup> and John Hayes and Carl Holladay called it also the history “of” the text.<sup>38</sup> Thus, a study of the history “behind/of” the text may function as an effective tool to study the backgrounds and the sources of the text. For example, the religious sources, the social circumstances, the cultural factors, and the political situations that formed the text.<sup>39</sup> Second, the history “within” that Hayes and Holladay called it, “history *in* the text”<sup>40</sup> because every text has own history, story, and message. They explain it:

what the text itself says or describes -the story it tells- but with the story of the text, or what one writer calls the “career of the text”-its own history: how, why, when, where, and in what circumstances it originated; by whom and for whom it was written, composed, edited, produced, and preserved; why it was produced and the various influences that affected its origin, formation, development, preservation, and transmission.<sup>41</sup>

The second question is why I choose historical-critical. I may suggest two points to answer this question. The first point relates to the method itself, and the second relates to the African context. Thus, I will argue in the following paragraphs that historical-criticism has many advantages for analyzing the text in the African context.

First, historical criticism itself has many advantages because it analyzes the text in two aspects as I mentioned previously, focusing both on the history “behind/of” the text and “in/within” the text. In addition, this method may be able to address the basic questions about the date, place, and writing as Hayes and Holladay argue.<sup>42</sup>

Second, historical criticism is appropriate to the African context as Ukpong and Holter argue.<sup>43</sup> I agree with Ukpong when he discusses the question, “Can African Old Testament scholarships escape the historical critical approach?”<sup>44</sup> In other words, does African biblical scholarship need this method?<sup>45</sup> His answer is “yes,” and he provides three reasons that I

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<sup>37</sup> Ukpong, “Can African Old Testament Scholarship Escape the Historical Critical Approach?” (1996-2006), 2.

<sup>38</sup> Hayes and Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis* (1987), 45.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ukpong, “Can African Old Testament Scholarship Escape the Historical Critical Approach?” (1996-2006), 2-3. Holter, “The Role of Historical-Critical Methodology in African Old Testament Studies,” (2011), 377.

<sup>44</sup> Ukpong, “Can African Old Testament Scholarship Escape the Historical Critical Approach?” (1996-2006), 2.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 4.

confirm. First, historical criticism method provides the critical reading to African scholarship. Second, historical-critical method avoids many abuses of the other methods in approaching the Bible. Third, it links the text to the African cultural and social-historical context.<sup>46</sup> The third reason of Ukpong's answer moves us to another important question that Holter asks: "What is then the role of historical-critical methodology in African Old Testament studies?"<sup>47</sup> I agree with Holter that historical criticism has a very important role in the African context, as he explains:

Making critical use of this methodology, as a tool for creating interaction between ancient texts and contemporary contexts, the African guild of Old Testament studies demonstrates not only its interaction with the global guild of Old Testament studies, but also its commitment to its own interpretative context.<sup>48</sup>

From my perspective, the only point that supports me in criticizing the historical-critical method is that: it focuses more on the history of the text, and may focus less on the contemporary message. I agree with Ukpong's statement that, "historical criticism, which is interested more in the history of the text than it its message."<sup>49</sup> In addition, Barton expresses his "unease" with the historical-criticism because it can take us away behind the text.<sup>50</sup> In addition, B. H. Childs argues that historical-criticism is not completely and unsatisfactory theological.<sup>51</sup> For this reason, I should add an understanding the text itself by using another method. This method is the literary criticism that focuses on "the text itself."

### 2.3.2 Literary Criticism

Literary criticism covers many literary aspects of the text; but I only use the part that focus on establishing the text for my exegesis that what we called it textual criticism. I will deal with a text that has been transmitted in the original language, and then translated into foreign languages. Thus, the text I now have, which was produced thousands of years ago but has been transmitted, written, redacted, edited, and translated through different processes in different periods by

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Holter, "The Role of Historical-Critical Methodology in African Old Testament Studies," (2011), 387.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ukpong, "Can African Old Testament Scholarship Escape the Historical Critical Approach?" (1996-2006), 4.

<sup>50</sup> Barton, *Reading the Old Testament* (1996), 78.

<sup>51</sup> Cited in: *ibid*, 79.

different persons.<sup>52</sup> In addition, every transmission and translation has its own characteristic, history,<sup>53</sup> social condition, way of thinking, and theology.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, every author, redactor, editor, and translator, “is a child of a particular time and of a particular culture.”<sup>55</sup> Consequently, many variant readings for the same passage appeared as a result of these long and diverse processes.<sup>56</sup>

There are three reasons to use this method. First, literary criticism will help me to determine and examine the problems of the text such as variant forms, corruption, multi layer, multi authorship, and the effects of the redactors and translators.<sup>57</sup> Second, literary criticism will help me “to establish the original wording,”<sup>58</sup> from all the sources that I have. Third, literary criticism will help “to determine the best form and wording of the text that the modern reader should use.”<sup>59</sup>

### 2.3.3 Conclusion

The purpose of the previous sections was to explain the exegetical theory, which consists of two main methods that will mostly cover the three modes: “behind the text,” “in the text or the text itself,” and “in front the text.”<sup>60</sup> First, the historical-critical method will help me to reach the textual history or “What is *behind the text*?”<sup>61</sup> In addition, it will help me to answer many exegetical-historical questions, such as, questions about the date “when,” questions about the place “where,” questions about the persons “for whom and by whom,” and questions about the writing “how, why, and in what” as Hayes, Holladay, and Berlejung argue.<sup>62</sup> Second, literary criticism will help me to analyze “in the text, within the text, or the text itself” to establish the original text.<sup>63</sup> In addition it will help me: to understand the transmission process, to establish the

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<sup>52</sup> Ernst Würthwein, *The Text of the Old Testament: An Introduction to the Biblia Hebraica* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), xiii-xiv, 69, 105. Hayes and Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis* (1987), 33.

<sup>53</sup> Barton, *Reading the Old Testament* (1996), xiv.

<sup>54</sup> Würthwein, *The Text of the Old Testament* (1995), xiii-xiv, 69, 105.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, xiii-xiv, 69, 105. Hayes and Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis* (1987), 33.

<sup>57</sup> Hayes and Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis* (1987), 38. Würthwein, *The Text of the Old Testament* (1995), 51-52, 105. Barton, *Reading the Old Testament* (1996), 21.

<sup>58</sup> Hayes and Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis* (1987), 38

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>61</sup> West, *Contextual Bible Study* (1993), 27.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

original wording, and to determine the best form and wording of the text. Naturally, my exegetical analysis is built on previous scholarship of Exodus.<sup>64</sup> For example, John Durham in his work *Exodus*, William Propp in his study *Exodus 1-18*, and Brevard S. Childs, *Exodus: A Commentary* have many benefits for analyzing the text. All the three focus on establishing the original text, studying the historical background, analyzing the literary sources, presenting the claims of other scholars, and examining the issues that comes up from the text. However, in the next section, I will present my hermeneutical theory.

## 2.4 Hermeneutical Theory

Hermeneutics is derived from the Greek term “hermēneuō,” which means “interpret.”<sup>65</sup> Biblical hermeneutics is a discipline, art, or theory of understanding the biblical texts.<sup>66</sup> It asks the main question of, “*how Scripture is interpreted in the present.*”<sup>67</sup> Thus, biblical hermeneutics does not only focuses on the text, but also focus on different kinds of communication (verbal, oral, writing, and symbolic), language, understanding, meaning, and subject. Nowadays, hermeneutical theory can be defined as the study of the communication between the four factors of understanding the text: the author and his world, the text and its world, the reader and his world, and the subject matter that connects the author, the text, and the reader together.<sup>68</sup> According to A. C. Thiselton in *New Dictionary of Theology*, J. C Dannhauer’s, in his study: *Hermeneutics Sacra* (1654), used the term hermeneutics probably for the first time as an

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<sup>64</sup> For example, Martin Noth, *Exodus: a Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962). Ronald Clements, the Cambridge Bible Commentary on the New English Bible: P. R. Ackroyd et al (ed.), *Exodus Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972). J. Philip Hyatt, The New Century Bible Commentary: Ronald Clements and Matthew Black (ed.), *Exodus* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 1971). Brevard S. Childs, *Exodus: a Commentary* (London: S.C.M. Press, 1974). John Durham, Word Biblical Commentary 3: Bruce m. Metzger et al (ed.), *Exodus* (Waco, Texas: Word Books, Publisher, 1987). William Propp, The Anchor Bible 2: *Exodus 1-18: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 1999). Abel Ndjerareou, “Exodus,” Tokunboh Adeyemo (ed.), *Africa Bible Commentary*. (Nairobi, Kenya: Word Alive Publishers, 2006), 85-128. Walter Kaiser, “Exodus,” Tremper Longman and David E. Garland (ed.), *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 2006), 333-561. George Coats, Forms of the Old Testament Literature 2 A: Rolf P. Knierim and Gene M. Tucker (ed.), *Exodus 1-18*. (Grand Rapids, Mich: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999). Carol Meyers, The New Cambridge Bible Commentary: Ben Witherington (ed.), *Exodus* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

<sup>65</sup> A. C. Thiselton, “Hermeneutics,” Sinclair Ferguson et al (ed.), *New Dictionary of Theology* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 293-298, 293.

<sup>66</sup> Werner G. Jeanrond, “Hermeneutics,” *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christian Theology* (2011), 209-2011, 209.

<sup>67</sup> Manfred Oeming, *Contemporary Biblical Hermeneutics: An Introduction* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2006), 2.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, 7.

explanation for the theme-area.<sup>69</sup> Therefore, biblical hermeneutics has a long that history back to the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D., even before Christianity (NT), that was used inside the OT itself.<sup>70</sup> According to many scholars as Manfred Oeming, there are many earlier attempts and examples in the OT that provide and develop: new interpretation, rewritten, and new ways to understand the oldest OT texts through contextualisation process.<sup>71</sup> We can see clearly the hermeneutical method that was used as a discipline in the Qumran community called “Midrash.” For example, Rabbi Hillel formulated the seven rules “middōth” to interpret the OT’s texts. In the NT, Jesus and the NT’s authors used hermeneutics to interpret the OT (e.g. Luke 24:25-26, c.f. Isa 61: 1-2).<sup>72</sup>

My hermeneutical analysis will answer the question of how Exod. 3:7-10 is interpreted and used in the present Egyptian context. It helps me to examine the role of the text for the contemporary Egyptian reader. For that, I will formulate a hermeneutical theory that includes: inculturation perspective, liberation perspective, and Egyptian perspective. This theory will concentrate on the third mode, “in front of the text.” Since this thesis speaks to the Egyptian context, it should be aware of the contemporary context. Thus, it will help me to develop a method to read or reread the text from an Egyptian perspective. However, my hermeneutical works are built on previous Egyptian and Arabic OT scholarship as they have been trying to formulate an Arabic hermeneutics that is appropriate for the context of the Middle East.<sup>73</sup>

I believe that the hermeneutical theory consists of three pillars that are inculturation perspective, liberation perspective, and Egyptian perspective. I will explain these three elements of hermeneutical theory in the following paragraphs.

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<sup>69</sup> Thiselton, “Hermeneutics,” (1988), 293.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Oeming, *Contemporary Biblical Hermeneutics* (2006), 1.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, 1-2. Thiselton, “Hermeneutics,” (1988), 293-294.

<sup>73</sup> For example, Marzouk, *Egypt As a Monster in the Book of Ezekiel* (2015). Munther Isaac, *From Land to Lands, from Eden to the Renewed Earth: A Christ-Centered Biblical Theology of the Promised Land* (PhD diss: Middlesex University London, 2014). Yacoub, *Conflicts between Christian and Muslims in Egypt since 1980: Christian Perspective on Being a Minority in Egypt* (Master’s Thesis, School of Mission and Theology, 2011). Ryād Kāsīs, *Why Do not We Read the Book That Christ Read It? Towards a Better Understanding of the Old Testament* (Cairo: PTW, 2010). Mitri Raheb, *I Am a Palestinian Christian* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995). Ekrām Imāy, *The Zionist Infiltration to Christianity* (Cairo: Dar ‘lmshrq, 1991).

### 2.4.1 Inculturation

Inculturation hermeneutics is “an African approach to biblical interpretation.”<sup>74</sup> I agree with Madipoane Masenya that this approach probably applied or linked to the African biblical discipline by Justin S. Ukpong as he explains it in his to basic articles, “Inculturation Hermeneutics: An African Approach to Biblical Interpretation,” and “Rereading the Bible with African Eyes Inculturation and Hermeneutics.”<sup>75</sup> Ukpong explained this approach:

Inculturation hermeneutics is a contextual hermeneutic methodology that seeks to make any community of ordinary people and their social-cultural context the subject of interpretation of the Bible through the use of the conceptual frame of reference of the people and the involvement of the ordinary people in the interpretation process.<sup>76</sup>

From the previous definition, I believe that this approach is an appropriate to my project for many reasons. First, it is an African approach that it arises as a response to reading the Bible from African or non-western perspective. Thus, this approach will help me to read or reread the text by Egyptian eyes, cultural concern, life experience, and Coptic worldview. Second, and most importantly, it focuses on the reader and his/her context and the contemporary communities and their contexts.<sup>77</sup> Thus, the reader in the interpretation process is inside her/his socio-cultural context, and the interpreter does not isolate himself/herself, but he/she is aware of the daily life in the communities.<sup>78</sup> Third, the context of inculturation hermeneutics is wide enough to cover many areas, including social, religious, political, historical, and economic. In addition, it is dynamic in the communities, groups, and individual life.<sup>79</sup> Fourth, Ukpong does not separate this approach from the other disciples.<sup>80</sup> Rather than the use of inculturation hermeneutics gives the

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<sup>74</sup> Justin S. Ukpong, “Inculturation Hermeneutics: An African Approach to Biblical Interpretation,” Walter Dietrich and Ulrich Luz (ed.), *The Bible in a World Context: An Experiment in Contextual Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans, 2002), 17-32, 17. Justin S. Ukpong “Rereading the Bible with African Eyes Inculturation and Hermeneutics,” *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 91 (Jun 1995, p 3-14), URL: <http://web.b.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=321307ab-8f21-4c0b-888c-6b94886e6ca8%40sessionmgr101&vid=11&hid=115>. (Accessed 2 February, 2017).

<sup>75</sup> Madipoane Masenya, “Ruminating on Justin S. Ukpong’s Inculturation Hermeneutics and Its Implications for the Study of African Biblical Hermeneutics Today,” *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* (2016), 1-6. URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v72i1.3343> (Accessed 2 February, 2017). Ukpong Justin S. “Inculturation Hermeneutics,” (1995), 3-14. URL: <http://web.b.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=321307ab-8f21-4c0b-888c-6b94886e6ca8%40sessionmgr101&vid=11&hid=115>. (Accessed 2 February, 2017).

<sup>76</sup> Ukpong, “Inculturation Hermeneutics,” (2002), 18.

<sup>77</sup> Ukpong, “Rereading the Bible with African Eyes Inculturation and Hermeneutics,” (1995), 3- 5.

<sup>78</sup> Ukpong, “Inculturation Hermeneutics,” (2002), 20.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>80</sup> Masenya “Ruminating on Justin S. Ukpong’s Inculturation Hermeneutics and Its Implications for the Study of African Biblical Hermeneutics Today,” (2016), 2.

opportunity to deal with the text from different literary, historical, theological, and contextual areas to understand the original meaning and to look for the meaning of the text in the contemporary context.<sup>81</sup> This approach highlights the role of critical reading to achieve the original text as Ukpong explains:

It is God's Word in human language, which implies human culture with its ideology, worldview, orientation, perspective, values and disvalues that are intertwined with the Word of God. This raises a need for a critical ethical reading.<sup>82</sup>

Finally, this approach produces a dynamic dialogue between the author, the reader, the text, the subject, and the context. Thus, the text does not only belong to the past, but also belongs to the present<sup>83</sup> because inculturation hermeneutics sees the Bible as "a document of faith and therefore demands entry into and sharing the faith of the biblical community expressed in the text."<sup>84</sup> Thus, I agree with Masenya that inculturation hermeneutics makes the text alive, active, and effective in the life of the readers through the dynamic dialogue between the biblical text and the contemporary context.<sup>85</sup>

## 2.4.2 Liberation

I agree with Hayes and Holladay that one of purposes of the interpretation is doing theology. As they argue, "Not only should the exegete consult the work of theologians but also the exegete who investigates biblical texts also becomes engaged in doing theology."<sup>86</sup> This thesis speaks to the Egyptian Christian minority that is suffering. Hence, I would like to employ this thesis to be fruitful in the life of the Egyptian church by formulating a liberation theology for those are suffering in Egypt.

Liberation theology flourished in Latin America since the 1960s as "a revolutionary theological movement."<sup>87</sup> The starting point of liberation theology was a biblical theological

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<sup>81</sup> Ukpong, "Rereading the Bible with African Eyes Inculturation and Hermeneutics," (1995), 6-8. Ukpong, "Inculturation Hermeneutics," (2002), 25.

<sup>82</sup> Ukpong, "Inculturation Hermeneutics," (2002), 18.

<sup>83</sup> Ukpong, "Rereading the Bible with African Eyes Inculturation and Hermeneutics," (1995), 10.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>85</sup> Masenya "Ruminating on Justin S. Ukpong's Inculturation Hermeneutics and Its Implications for the Study of African Biblical Hermeneutics Today," (Accessed 2 February, 2017), 5. Ukpong, "Inculturation Hermeneutics: An African Approach to Biblical Interpretation," (2002), 18-19.

<sup>86</sup> Hayes and Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's Handbook* (1987), 148.

<sup>87</sup> Dan Cohn-Sherbok, "Liberation Theology," R. J. Coggins and J. L. Houlden (ed.), *A Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation*. (London: SCM Press, 1990), 396-197, 396.



reflection on the situation of poor and oppressed people.<sup>88</sup> Liberation Theology spread widely from Latin America to the entire world, such as “Liberation Theology in Asia” and “Liberation Theology in Africa.”<sup>89</sup> Liberation Theology covered many aspects of life, including physical, economical, political, spiritual, and social. Exod. 3:7-10 has been used hermeneutically by the people who were oppressed in these different ways. Hence, the text became the main source of all kinds of Liberation Theology. As I mentioned, the Egyptian Christian is suffering as a minority among the majority. I am interested to use the text hermeneutically to formulate an Egyptian liberation theology for the Christian minority that is suffering in Egypt.

### 2.4.3 Egyptian

I agree with Holter who argues that Egyptian interpretation has had a long history since the beginning of Christianity. The OT and Egyptian hermeneutics have had a strong relationship the history of interpretation of the Orthodox Church.<sup>90</sup> J.A. Loubser argues that, “For the first six century the Bible was studied in Egypt like no other country.”<sup>91</sup> The Egyptian Fathers were pioneers in the Bible hermeneutics, such as Clement of Alexandria (150-215) who created the allegorical sacred-meaning hermeneutical approach, and Origen (185-254) who formed the allegorical grammatical-historical-meaning hermeneutical approach.<sup>92</sup> Finally, I believe that this relationship is strong and alive because the Coptic Church used the OT in its liturgical worship. As J.A. Loubser explains, in the Coptic Church “the Old Testament is read from cover to cover as a New Testament witness. Thus the offices, ceremonies, laws, and covenants of the Old Testament are explained as allegorical prefigurations of New Testament realities.”<sup>93</sup>

I believe that Exod. 3:7-10 may have been a challenge Egyptian biblical hermeneutics because it is difficult to understand in the Egyptian context due to the many complex ways it presents a negative image of Egypt. The Egyptian interpreters have mostly avoided interpreting this text. I do not agree with Egyptian interpreters that the OT should be avoided because this attitude has been making a wide gap between the text and the context. Some scholars seeks to

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> For more information: Randall Prior, “Liberation Theology,” Daniel Patte (ed.), *the Cambridge Dictionary of Christianity* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2010), 725-727.

<sup>90</sup> Knut Holter, *Contextualized Old Testament Scholarship in Africa* (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2008), 2

<sup>91</sup> Loubser, “How al-Mokatam Mountain Was Moved,” (2000), 124.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid, 116. Thiselton, “Hermeneutics,” (1988), 293-294.

<sup>93</sup> Loubser, “How al-Mokatam Mountain Was Moved,” (2000), 123.

discuss these issues. For example, Safwat Marzouk, in his book *Egypt as a Monster in the Book of Ezekiel*, discusses the negative image of Egypt.<sup>94</sup> In fact, it is rare to find Egyptian interpretations of this text. I believe that we should discuss every topic in the Bible to understand it. However, this study speaks to the Egyptian context, so it should be aware of the contemporary context by use of contextual-criticism.

#### **2.4.4 Contextual Criticism**

There are various ways to study the context. As I see it, fieldwork is a good approach because it will help me as an effective and practical tool to analyze the second part of the major question of this thesis, and how these verses are understood by a selection of Egyptian readers. Individual interviews are the main tool for collecting data. The sample of the fieldwork study was Interviews with ten young Egyptian pastors from around Egypt. The young pastors were chosen for several reasons. They are well-educated and active in church and society. Most of them are doing a good job of leading the church in establishing good relations with the Egyptian society in which the majority is Muslim.

#### **2.4.5 Conclusion**

Egyptian hermeneutics have misunderstood or ignored this text because of the negative image. I believe that modern Egyptian biblical hermeneutics should not ignore this text because it is a rich and a key text in the Bible and it has a liberation message for the Egyptian context. The reader should seek to understand the message of the text, and apply the message in his/her context. In order to read the text rightly and find its meaning in the Egyptian context, contextual-criticism is helpful and practical hermeneutical tool with which to analyze the mode “in front the text.” This method will also help to examine the role of the text in the contemporary Egyptian context. In addition, it helps me to cross the gap from the text to the context, from the Western reading to the Eastern reading, and from the academic reading of the text to the contemporary reading of Egyptian Christian readers.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Marzouk, *Egypt as a Monster in the Book of Ezekiel* (2015).

<sup>95</sup> Ukpong, “Rereading the Bible with African Eyes Inculturation and Hermeneutics,” (Accessed 2 February, 2017), 4.

## Chapter Three

### AN EXEGETICAL ANALYSIS

#### 3.1 Introduction

In the general introduction, I have explained that the purpose of this thesis is to trace the question of how Exodus 3: 7-10 can be read from a consciously Egyptian perspective, exegetically, with regard to the role of Egypt in this text and in the OT, and hermeneutically with regard to the role of the text for the Egyptian contemporary reader. In order to answer this question, I divided it into two questions. In this chapter, I will examine the first question: How Exodus 3: 7-10 can be read from a consciously Egyptian perspective, exegetically with regard to the role of Egypt in this text and in the OT? Hence, I will analyze, discuss, and examine what we can know about the exegetical history of the text with regard to the role of Egypt in this text. Thus, the main body of this chapter consists of four main sections: translation, literary background, exegetical analysis, and evaluation.

#### 3.2 Translation

The text of Exodus 3:7-10, as we have it, has gone through a variety of processes of transmission and translation that resulted in diverse forms of readings and some corruptions. I agree with Ernst Würthwein that there is no manuscript and translation without errors.<sup>96</sup> Thus, the aim of this section is to establish the original text and examine the problems of its corruption by using all the sources available to me. This is my translation:

(7)And the Lord said,<sup>97</sup> I have surely seen the misery of my people who is in Egypt; I have heard their cry by reason of their slave drivers, for I know their

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<sup>96</sup> Würthwein, *The Text of the Old Testament* (1995), xiii, 107-111.

<sup>97</sup> The Septuagint (LXX) adds “πρὸς Μωϋσῆν/ to Moses” after “said.” (Lancelot Charles Lee Brenton, *The Septuagint Version: Greek and English* (Grand Rapids Mich: Zondervan, 1970), 72). The significant point here is that *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* does not mention this note. (Alt, *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (1977), 89). I think that it is one of what Würthwein calls “deliberate alterations,” and functions as a descriptive term added by one of translators or editors (Würthwein, *The Text of the Old Testament* (1995), 111). Propp confirms my claim, and he also argues that “πρὸς Μωϋσῆν/ to Moses” functions as a descriptive term added by one of the translators. (Propp, *Exodus 1-18* (1999), 184). In spite of these errors, I will continue reading and using the Masoretic Text (MT, **מ**) because it is supported by all the other witnesses. (Alt, *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (1977), 89).

suffering,<sup>98</sup> (8) and I have come down<sup>99</sup> to liberate it from the hand of Egypt, and lead it from this land to a good and wide land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites,<sup>100</sup> and the Amorites, and the Perizzites,<sup>101</sup> and the Hivites, and the Jebusites. (9) And now, behold, the cry of the sons of Israel has come to Me, and also I have seen the oppression which the Egyptians are oppressing them. (10) and now go, and I will send you to Pharaoh<sup>102</sup> and bring out<sup>103</sup> my people, the Israelites, from Egypt.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> The term “אֶת־מַכְאֲבֵיהֶם,” which was translated “their sufferings” (NRSV and NAS) and “their suffering” (NIV), has another reading in the Samaritan Pentateuch (Sam) and the Vulgate (Vg) that is “מַכְאֲבוֹ/his suffering.” In addition, the suffix is plural in the LXX, the Syriac Peshitta, Targum, and Targum Pseude-Jonathae. (Alt, *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (1977), 89). Propp argues that the Sam reading and MT reading are equal. (Propp, *Exodus 1-18* (1999), 184). From my point of view, I disagree with Propp, and I will accept the MT reading because there is a variety between the Sam-Vg from one side and the LXX-Syriac Peshitta from another side. In addition, the MT reading is supported by many witnesses such as Qumran manuscripts, Aquila, Symmachus, Theodotion, Old Latin versions, Sahidic version, etc. (Alt, *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (1977), 89. Lee Brenton, *The Septuagint Version* (1970), 72).

<sup>99</sup> The MT reads the verb “יָרַדְתָּ” in the past tense “have come down,” but the Sam reads it in the future tense “תָּרַדְתָּ/will come down.” (Alt, *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (1977), 89). I have a different opinion from Propp’s claim about “The tense of the verb is uncertain.” (Propp, *Exodus 1-18* (1999), 184). From my viewpoint, I accept the past tense form of the MT reading because it is supported by all the other witnesses. In addition, the past tense form is more appropriate and logic for the context of the text.

<sup>100</sup> The noun “וְהִיטִי/and the Hittites” has another reading in some medieval Hebrew manuscripts of the Sam and the LXX<sup>106</sup> that they omitted the particle conjunction “וְ/and.” (Alt, *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (1977), 89). However, I will keep the reading of the MT because it is supported by all the other witnesses. In addition, all of the other LXX manuscripts and codex followed the MT reading.<sup>100</sup> (Alt, *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (1977), 89).

<sup>101</sup> The Sam and the LXX add the noun “Gergesites/Girgashites/καὶ Γεργεσαίων/וְהַגֵּרְשִׁי” after “the Perizzites” (c.f. Exod. 3:17). (Brenton, *The Septuagint Version* (1970), 72). In addition, the list of nations in Exodus 3:8 is different from the other lists in Pentateuch. In fact, there is diversity in the number of the nations in the Pentateuch. For example, five nations (Num. 13:29), six nations (MT: Exod. 3: 8), seven nations (Sam and LXX Exod. 3: 8), or ten nations (Gen. 15:19-21). (Kaiser, “Exodus,” (2006), 367. Propp, *Exodus 1-18* (1999), 184. Mayers, *Exodus* (2009), 54). However, I will keep the MT reading because it is supported by all of the other witnesses (Alt, *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (1977), 89). In addition, the role in the textual text is that the shorter reading is preferred. Paul W. Ferris, A Guide to the Use of the BHS Critical Apparatus, Bethel Seminary <http://people.bethel.edu/~pferris/otcommon/Hebrew/hebrew-guides/HEBSTGD007.pdf> (Accessed 13 Dec, 2016), 1-7, 2.

<sup>102</sup> The LXX adds “βασιλέα Αἰγύπτου/king of Egypt” after “Pharaoh.” (Lee Brenton, *The Septuagint Version* (1970), 72). However, I will keep the MT because it is supported by many witnesses. (Alt, *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (1977), 89). In addition, the shorter reading is preferred. (Ferris, *A Guide to the Use of the BHS Critical Apparatus* (Accessed 13 Dec, 2016).

<sup>103</sup> The imperative verb “וְהוֹצֵאתָ/and bring out” has another reading in the LXX, the Sam, and the Vg that converted the imperative form to indicative future form “וְהוֹצֵאתְךָ/and you should take out.” (Alt, *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (1977), 89. Propp, *Exodus 1-18* (1999), 184-185. Durham, *Exodus* (1987), 28). Therefore, I prefer the MT because it is supported by many witnesses, and there is not no different in the meaning, and it is the short reading. (Alt, *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, (1977), 89. Ferris, A Guide to the Use of the BHS Critical Apparatus (Accessed 13 Dec, 2016), 2).

<sup>104</sup> The LXX, some witnesses of MT, and the Targumim add “גְּחִץ/the land” after “Egypt.” (Brenton, *The Septuagint Version* (1970), 72. Propp, *Exodus 1-18* (1999), 185). Therefore, I keep the MT because it is supported by many witnesses, and it is the short reading. (Alt, *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (1977), 84. Ferris, A Guide to the Use of the BHS Critical Apparatus (Accessed 13 Dec, 2016).

### 3.3 Literary Background

The significant point is that the author of Exodus 3:7-10 used the noun מִצְרַיִם/miṣrayim, which occurs four times in verses 7, 8 and 10, which describe Egypt as “a land of misery,” and the Egyptians as “slave drivers.” Because Egypt and Egyptians are the subject matter in the text, it would be good to make a brief survey about Egypt in the OT. My text is the heart of the exodus motif that dominates in this second book of the Pentateuch. This exodus motif holds additional importance because it became the grammar and the language of the future salvation in the OT (e.g. Isa. 11:51; Jer. 31-34) and then also in the NT (e.g. 1 Corin. 10:1-11).<sup>105</sup> Thus, it is good to present briefly the exodus motif in the OT, which dominated most of the OT books. In the two following main sections, I will present the “Egypt motif” and “the exodus motif” in the OT.

#### 3.3.1 Egypt Motif

The OT uses the noun מִצְרַיִם (miṣrayim) 702 times in four forms. The noun מִצְרַיִם (miṣrayim) which is translated “Egypt,” occurs 666 times (e.g. Gen. 12:10). The term מִצְרִי (miṣrî), which is translated “Egyptian,” was used 30 times (e.g. Gen. 41:55). The noun מִצְוֹר (māṣôr), which is translated “Egypt,” was mentioned 5 times (e.g. Gen. 10:6). The term אֲבֵל מִצְרַיִם (’ābēl miṣrayim), which is translated “Abel-mizraim,” occurs once (e.g. Gen. 50:11).<sup>106</sup>

According to the Table of nations in Gen. 10:1-31, the word “Miṣr” returns back to מִצְרַיִם (miṣrayim), the son of חָם (Ham). The author of Gen. 10:6 included Egyptians with Cushites, Libyans, and Canaanites in one group. From my perspective, this is strange because the four races had a different backgrounds, cultures, and languages. Thus, I agree with H. Ringgren that “the table of nations likely reflects politico-historical groupings rather than racial-linguistic relationship; it provides a picture of the political situation in pre-Israelites times.”<sup>107</sup>

The relationship between Egypt and the OT is very old, wide, complex,<sup>108</sup> and neglected,<sup>109</sup> so I will limit myself to stay in line with this thesis’s purpose. The general image of

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<sup>105</sup> Cited in: Oren Martin, *New Studies In Biblical Theology* 34, D. A. Carson (ed.), *Bound for the Promised Land: the Land Promise in God’s Redemptive Plan* (Downers Grove, ILL: Inter Varsity Press, 2015), 77.

<sup>106</sup> Bible Word Study | מִצְרַיִם, Exported from Logos Bible Software 6 (12:10 PM February 2, 2017), 1-3, 1.

<sup>107</sup> Ringgren, “מִצְרַיִם miṣrayim,” (1997), 520-521.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid, 524.

<sup>109</sup> John D. Currid, *Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Books, 1999), 23-27.

Egypt in the OT seems negative. A deeper reading of the OT, however, shows us that there are both positive and negative images. Holter confirms my claim, and he argues that a close reading gives us a positive image as the negative image.<sup>110</sup> Tewoldemedhin Habtu draws especial attention about “the dual image: Slave house/place of asylum.”<sup>111</sup> In the following section, I will argue that there is a tension in the OT texts that speak about Egypt because they portray Egypt both negatively and positively. There much evidence to support my claim in the Pentateuch, the Former Prophets, the Latter Prophets, and the Writings.

The Pentateuch reflects a tension about Egypt and the Egyptian people because it portrays Egypt both negatively and positively. On the one hand, the Pentateuch portrays Egypt negatively. There are several points to support my claim. First, the Pentateuch consistently portrays Egypt as, “the house of slavery” (e.g. Exod. 13:3; Deut. 5:6) and “the iron-smelter” (e.g. Deut. 4:20).<sup>112</sup> Second, the Pentateuch says that the Egyptians treated the Hebrews harshly and hard (Deut. 26:6 NIV).<sup>113</sup> Third, the Pentateuch portrays Egyptians as foreigners’ person with a strange language (e.g. Deut. 28: 11). Fourth, there are texts that explain that there were struggles and tensions between YHWH and the Egyptian gods (e.g. Exod.7-12).<sup>114</sup> On the other hand, we can observe that the Pentateuch portrays Egypt with a positive image also. There are several points to support my claim. First, Egypt was the place of shelter in time of famines for many Hebrew refugees, such as Abram (e.g. Gen. 12:10) and the family of Jacob (e.g. Gen. 42:1, 43:1). Further, the patriarchal tradition considered that Egypt protected the entire world from famine (e.g. Gen. 41:57). Second, the Pentateuch explains that the Law was given to Moses in the land of Egypt (e.g. Exod. 19-24). Third, the tribe of Jacob becomes a nation in Egypt (e.g. Exod. 3:7). Fourth, the Pentateuch always presents Egypt as a rich and a fertile land, and it always has just a plenty of food and resources (e.g. Gen. 45:23, Exod. 16: 13).<sup>115</sup> The fertility of Egypt links with four other ideas in the OT. The OT links the rich and fertile land of Egypt with “the garden of the Lord.” (e.g. Gen. 13: 10). The rich and fertile land of Egypt can be linked also

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<sup>110</sup> Holter, *Contextualized Old Testament Scholarship in Africa* (2008), 59.

<sup>111</sup> Tewoldemedhin Habtu, “The Images of Egypt in the Old Testament: Reflection on African Hermeneutics,” Mary N. Getui et al. (ed.), *Interpreting the Old Testament in Africa* (Nairobi: Action Publishers, 2001), 55-64, 59.

<sup>112</sup> Ringgren, “מִצְרַיִם miṣrayim,” (1997), 520. Holter, *Contextualized Old Testament Scholarship in Africa* (2008), 57

<sup>113</sup> Holter, *Contextualized Old Testament Scholarship in Africa* (2008), 57.

<sup>114</sup> Ringgren, “מִצְרַיִם miṣrayim,” (1997), 526.

<sup>115</sup> Holter, *Contextualized Old Testament Scholarship in Africa* (2008), 58.

with the fruitfulness, growth, and multiplying of the people of the Hebrews (e.g. Exod. 1:7). The rich and fertile land of Egypt links with the memory of the people after their departure as they compared the desert with their situation when they were in Egypt (e.g. Exod. 16:2).<sup>116</sup> And, finally, the Pentateuch links the land of Egypt to the Promised Land. In fact, the Pentateuch presents the land of Egypt in a more positive light than the Promised Land itself. The land of Canaan is naturally poor because it is a mountainous and rainy land, in contrast with Egypt (e.g. Num. 16:13-14; Deut. 11:8-12).<sup>117</sup>

The Pentateuch characterizes the Egyptians as being very generous towards the Israelites. They gave them a high position in the political system, like Joseph, who became the second most important person in Egypt (Gen. 41:41-44, 47:6). The Egyptians offered the Israelites the best land in Egypt for free (Gen. 47: 1-12). The Egyptians provided Joseph's family with food for free (Gen. 47:12). The Egyptians granted the Israelites the freedom to live and to multiply, and the result was that they became very numerous (Gen.47:27). The Egyptians integrated the Israelites into their Egyptian life and culture (Gen. 41:45, Exod. 14:11). What's more, in the Exodus event, the Egyptians people were very generous with the Israelites, and they gave them articles of silver, articles of gold, and clothing (Exod. 12:35-36). The author of Exodus even said that "they plundered the Egyptians." (Exod. 12: 36).

In some instances, the Egyptians might be accepted within the people of God (Exod. 12:38; Num. 11:4). There was a closer relationship between the Israelites and the Egyptians, such as Abram and Hagar, in contrast to the other nations (Lev. 24:10-16). Holter explains that:

A mixed marriage between an Egyptian and an Israelite can, for instance, be mentioned without any condemnation (Leviticus 24:10-16). Whereas Ammonites and Moabites were never to be admitted into the congregation of Yahweh, not even after ten generations, Egyptians could do so after only three generations (Deuteronomy 23:4-9).<sup>118</sup>

Finally, there are many important parallels between the OT and Egyptian literature that seems to show that the Pentateuch's author may have been influenced by some Egyptian sources.

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Mayers, *Exodus* (2009), 54. Isaac, *From Land to Lands, From Eden to the Renewed Earth* (2014), 59.

<sup>118</sup> Holter, *Contextualized Old Testament Scholarship in Africa* (2008), 58.

For example, there are parallels between the OT's creation account and the Egyptians' creation account.<sup>119</sup>

The Former Prophets<sup>120</sup> seem to reflect the same tension as the Pentateuch. On the one hand, they, too, portray Egypt negatively. For example, they identify Egypt as “the house of slavery” (e.g. Josh. 24:17) and “the iron-smelter” (e.g. 1 Kings 8:51), and state that the Egyptians caused suffering for the Israelites (e.g. 1Sam. 10:18).<sup>121</sup> Some texts even reject all relationships with the Egyptians (e.g. 1 Kings. 11:1-4).<sup>122</sup> On the other hand, the Former Prophets reflect also the same positive image that the Pentateuch attested. For example, Egypt is famous of their wisdom literature (e.g. 1 Kings 4:30).<sup>123</sup> Egypt is the shelter of Hebrew refugees at the time of political conflicts (e.g. 1 Kings 11:40) and at the time of the attack by other nations (e.g. 2 Kings. 25:26).<sup>124</sup> We can see a political coalition and partnership between Egypt and Israel (e.g. 2 Kings. 18:21-24). What's more, the marriage alliance between Solomon and Pharaoh's daughter shows a strong political relationship (e.g. 1 King. 3:1, 7:8).<sup>125</sup>

The Latter Prophets<sup>126</sup> express the same tension as in the Pentateuch and in the Former Prophets. On the one hand, the Latter Prophets also identify Egypt using a negative images such as “the house of slavery” (e.g. Jer. 34:13; Micah 6:4), “a monster” (Ezek. 29), and “a cedar” (Ezek. 29).<sup>127</sup> The books of the Latter Prophets may mostly rejected all the gods of the Egyptians (e.g. Ezek. 20:7), and they rejected all alliances and relationships with the Egyptians (e.g. Isa. 31:1-3). There are many texts that describe conflicts between YHWH and the Pharaohs (Isa. 30:1-7; Ezek. 29:1-16). What's more, the books of the Latter Prophets include many judgments, signs, and oracles against Egypt, Egyptians, and pharaohs (e.g. Isa 19; Jer. 25:19; Ezek. 29:1-16).<sup>128</sup> On the other hand, the Latter Prophets also reflect a positive image, as we saw in the Pentateuch and in the Former Prophets. For example, YHWH will build an altar in the heart of

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<sup>119</sup> Currid, *Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament* (1999), 53-56.

<sup>120</sup> The Former Prophets are Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings.

<sup>121</sup> Holter, *Contextualized Old Testament Scholarship in Africa* (2008), 58.

<sup>122</sup> Holter, *Contextualized Old Testament Scholarship in Africa* (2008), 57. Ringgren, “מִצְרַיִם miṣrayim,” (1997), 520-530.

<sup>123</sup> Ringgren, “מִצְרַיִם miṣrayim,” (1997), 521.

<sup>124</sup> Holter, *Contextualized Old Testament Scholarship in Africa* (2008), 59.

<sup>125</sup> Currid, *Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament* (1999), 162.

<sup>126</sup> The Latter Prophets are the longer three books (Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel) and the twelve shorter/minor books (from Hosea to Malachi).

<sup>127</sup> Holter, *Contextualized Old Testament Scholarship in Africa* (2008), 59.

<sup>128</sup> Ringgren, “מִצְרַיִם miṣrayim,” (1997), 528-530.



Egypt. He will send a savior and defender who will rescue them because of their oppressors. YHWH will make Himself known to the Egyptians, and the Egyptians will acknowledge YHWH. The Egyptians will worship YHWH with sacrifices and grain offerings, and YHWH will bless the Egyptians, and Egypt will become His people (Isa.19:19-25). Egypt continues to be a refuge for the Israelites (e.g. Jer. 26:21). Egypt is the land of YHWH's signs and wonders (e.g. Jer. 32:20). Egypt supports Israel politically (e.g. Ezek. 29:6), and Egypt's army protects Jerusalem from the Babylonians (e.g. Jer. 37:5). Finally, the Hebrews long to go back again to Egypt and live there:

But if you continue to say, 'We will not stay in this land,' thus disobeying the voice of the Lord your God 14 and saying, 'No, we will go to the land of Egypt, where we shall not see war, or hear the sound of the trumpet, or be hungry for bread, and there we will stay.' (Jer. 42:13-14).

The Books of the Writings<sup>129</sup> also reflect the same tension that the Pentateuch attested. On the one hand, the Writings express the negative image of Egypt. For example, the Writings make many judgments against Egypt (e.g. Dan.11:43-43) and portray Egypt as, "the land of slavery" (e.g. Neh. 9:9).<sup>130</sup> On the other hand, the Writings express a positive image of Egypt. For example, Egypt was a land known for its wisdom literature, but also the authors of the Writings borrowed directly from Egypt such as with the poetic wisdom of Ameneemope (e.g. Prov. 22:17-25).<sup>131</sup> In addition, Egypt is portrayed as taking the initiative to strengthen its relationship with Israel by giving gifts (e.g. Psa. 68:31).<sup>132</sup> Finally, and most significantly, the Writings include many references about Egypt and the Egyptians that link with the tradition of exodus without portraying Egypt either negatively or positively (e.g. Psa. 81:4; 2 Chron. 6:5).

In the period following the OT, we can see that the positive relationship between Egypt and the Hebrews became the main image. For example, Egypt in general and Alexandria specifically was a shelter to Jews in the time of the Diaspora. In Alexandria, the Septuagint was translated in the third century B.C. In addition, the NT portrays Egypt positively such as in its depiction of Egypt as shelter for Jesus from Herod's persecution (Mat. 2:13). Finally, and most importantly,

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<sup>129</sup> The Books of the Writings are: Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and 1, 2 Chronicles.

<sup>130</sup> Holter, *Contextualized Old Testament Scholarship in Africa* (2008), 59.

<sup>131</sup> Ringgren, "מִצְרַיִם miṣrayim," (1997), 521. Currid, *Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament* (1999), 205-216.

<sup>132</sup> Holter, *Contextualized Old Testament Scholarship in Africa* (2008), 59.

Christian history shows us that the Egyptian Church has kept the Christian faith, even through centuries of persecution.

In short, most OT scholars, such as Ringgren, argue that the OT's portrayal of and Egypt depended on the nature of the political relationship between Israel and Egypt in different periods of history. For example, 1 Kings portrayed Egypt with a positive image (1 king 3:1, 9:16, 24) because the political relationship between Egypt and Israel was good.<sup>133</sup> On the other hand, Ezekiel portrayed Egypt negatively because the political relationship between Israel and Egypt was bad.<sup>134</sup>

### 3.3.2 Exodus Motif

The authors of the OT use the exodus motif in many forms and for many purposes. It is difficult to provide a full discussion about the exodus motif in the OT because it is such a huge topic, but a short presentation may help to clarify the text. The subject is complex, however, because OT authors use the exodus motif in a wide variety of ways: a narrative, event, creed, song, and exhortation or motivation. In addition, the motif shaped many other themes.

The exodus motif is a narrative (e.g. Exod. 1-14) that takes the reader on a journey that consists of a series of historical events from the death of Joseph to the crossing of the Red sea.<sup>135</sup> I agree with K. A. Kitchen that this narrative functions as the “basic historical reasons why Israel should accept and obey YHWH's covenant.”<sup>136</sup> I support Kitchen's claim for a number of reasons. First, exodus is the central narrative in the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham (e.g. Gen. 15: 13-14) that God will deliver his offspring from the land of slavery, and He gives them a new land (Gen.15:13-20).<sup>137</sup> Second, the exodus story includes the introduction of the Ten Commandments (Exod. 20:2; Deut. 5:6). Third, throughout most of the history of Israel, God uses the exodus to remind Israel about the covenant, as we can see in the conquest of the land time (e.g. Josh. 24:5-1), in the period of judges (e.g. Judg. 2:1-3), during the monarchy (e.g. 1 Sam 10:18-19; 1 Kings 8:51), in the exile, and even post-exile and later times (e.g. Neh. 9:9-12;

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<sup>133</sup> Ringgren, “מִצְרַיִם miṣrayim,” (1997), 521.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid, 520-521.

<sup>135</sup> K. A. Kitchen, “Exodus, The,” David Noel Freedman (ed.), *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* 2 (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 700-708, 700.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid, 701.

<sup>137</sup> Ndjerareou, “Exodus,” (2006), 85.

Jer. 2:6-7; Mic. 6: 3-4). Finally, the Psalms use this motif to remind Israel about the covenant in worship (e.g. Psa. 80, 81, 105). Thus, this exodus narrative became the reference and the measure for later biblical motifs, hermeneutics, and allusions to the exodus.<sup>138</sup>

The exodus motif is an event that witnesses to the God of Israel, and reveals God's mission and vision of saving His people, from their misery to His glory (e.g. Exod. 20:20; Lev. 25:38; Dan. 9:15), not only from Egypt, but also from any misery (Isa. 52: 4-6, 9-10).<sup>139</sup> Thus, this event shapes Israel's understanding of their God as the "God of the exodus." and it shapes the identity of the Hebrews as "people of the exodus." In addition, the exodus motif became the reference for the relationship between God and His people in both negative and positive situations, and provides a reference point for the relationship between Israel and the other nations.<sup>140</sup>

In Deut 26:1-10, the exodus motif has become a creed: "Today, I declare..." (Deut 26:1-10). The author of Deuteronomy uses the Hif'il perfect verb of the root נגד, which means "to declare," "to announce," "to proclaim," and "to confuse."<sup>141</sup> This creed consists of three main elements. The first is the identity of the God of Israel: His name (26:2), the place of His dwelling (26:2), His promise for fathers (26:3), His fulfillment for the offspring (26:3), His worship (26:4, 10), His character (26:7-8), His acts (26:8), and His attributes (26:8). The second element is the identity of Israel. Israel was a lost and small group of foreigners; yet they became a nation (26:5). Though the Hebrews had been slaves under the suffering of hard labor (26:7), God liberated them (26:8), and gave them a land (26:8). Third, the confession indicates some responsibilities that Israel had towards God as the required offerings of first-fruits, tithes (26:2, 10), worship (26:4, 10), rejoicing (26: 11), and taking care of the Levites and the foreigners (26: 11). Thus, the exodus shaped the creed of the Hebrews' faith from generation to generation (Exod. 12: 25-28).

The exodus motif also takes the form of song (e.g. Exod. 15:1-21; Psa. 77, 78, 105). The motif became a subject in the songs of the liturgy in the temple, synagogue, and homes.<sup>142</sup> Many songs attest the exodus motif, using many metaphors. For example, the song of Moses (Exod.

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<sup>138</sup> Kitchen, "Exodus, The" (1992), 701.

<sup>139</sup> Yohānā al-Mākāry, *Tafsīr Sifr al-Khurūj* (al-Qāhirah: Dār Majallat Murqus, 2014), 13, 33.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid, 35.

<sup>141</sup> Bible Word Study | נגד, Exported from Logos Bible Software 6 ( 10:28 AM April 07, 2017), 1-35, 1.

<sup>142</sup> al-Mākāry, *Tafsīr Sifr al-Khurūj* (2014), 27.

15:1-21) presents exodus as an act of redemption (Exod. 3:15). Thus, exodus became a metaphor about “God’s model of redemption,” as Christopher Wright argues.<sup>143</sup>

The exodus motif is an exhortation or a motivation to depart from Babylon (Isa. 48:20-22, 52:11-12).<sup>144</sup> The significant point is that the call to leave Babylon is the antithesis of the call to leave Egypt. For example, the Hebrews shall not go out in haste, and they shall not go in flight as their ancestors did in Egypt. In addition, in the exodus from Egypt, God protected the Hebrews both in front and behind (e.g. Exod. 13:21-22) while in the exodus from Babylon, God protected them only from the front.<sup>145</sup>

The exodus motif has shaped many biblical themes, such as worship (Exod. 5:1, 8:1; Jer. 7:22-23; ), the presence of God (e.g. Deut 4:7), festivals (Exod. 12:2-14; Deut. 16:1-8), holiness (Lev. 11:45; Isa. 52:11), new covenant (Jer. 31:31-34), care of strangers and others (e.g. Exod. 22: 21-26; Deut. 24:17-22), gifts (Deut. 26:1-5), gratitude (e.g. Deut 6:12), the forbidding of other gods (Josh. 24:14 ), and the coming of the Messiah (Jer. 23:5-8; Hag. 2:5-9).<sup>146</sup>

In short, the exodus motif is a very significant tradition because it was not considered just as a part of the past, but as an event that continues on and will be fulfilled in the future. Thus, the exodus motif became the source of salvation hope through the image of “the new exodus.” In every crisis, Israel asks for a new exodus, such as in the exile (e.g. Isa 43: 1-6; Ezek. 20: 41-44). We can see this clearly in the Scrolls of the Qumran community, which show that Israel sought “a new exodus” and to “renew” the covenant of salvation.<sup>147</sup>

### 3.4 Exegetical Analysis

I believe that it is good to understand the book of Exodus in the light of the book of Genesis for two reasons: 1) Exodus presents the transition from the end of the patriarchal traditions (1:1-6) to the tradition of Israel as a nation (1: 8-14).<sup>148</sup> And, 2) Exodus is a central narrative of the fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham in Genesis 12, 15, 17, and 22, that God would guide

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<sup>143</sup> Christopher J. H Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 265.

<sup>144</sup> John Watts, *Word Biblical Commentary 25: Isaiah 34-66* (Waco, Tex, Word Books, 1987), 2017.

<sup>145</sup> Joseph Blenkinsopp, *The Anchor Bible: Isaiah 56-66: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 2002), 343.

<sup>146</sup> Kitchen, “Exodus, The” (1992), 700-708. al-Mākāry, *Tafsīr Sifr al-Khurūj* (2014), 9-37.

<sup>147</sup> Richard A. Horsley, “Renewal Movements and Resistance to Empire in Ancient Judea,” R. S. Sugirtharajah (ed.), *The Postcolonial Biblical Reader* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub, 2006), 69-77, 72.

<sup>148</sup> Coats, *Exodus 1-18* (1999), 4-5.

His offspring from the land of slavery and give them a new land (Gen.15:13-20).<sup>149</sup> The first chapter of Exodus presents the background of the Egyptian oppression of the Israelites (1:1-22); the second chapter presents the background of the liberator (Moses);<sup>150</sup> And the third chapter presents the theophany of the deity of Israel with Moses.

There are two particularly significant points in chapter three. The first one is that after the author introduces the deity of Israel as the deity of the patriarchs<sup>151</sup> in verse 6, he introduces the deity of Israel with the name of the four letters יהוה<sup>152</sup> as a personal name of Israel's deity in verse 7, which means, "I am who I am" (Exod. 3:14), and it occurs 6823 times in the OT. In Israel, Canaan, and Egypt the names of gods and goddess were used to give an explanation of the character, type, power, and identity of the deity.<sup>153</sup> Thus, we can say the name was a distinguishing mark, as Rose argues.<sup>154</sup>

The second significant point is the anthropomorphic style that formed this text. This style uses human actions and language to express God's attributes and actions, in order to give the readers a better understanding.<sup>155</sup> The text uses many clearly anthropomorphic terms, such as "observed, heard, know, come down, deliver, and bring."<sup>156</sup> The text says that YHWH not only "observes, hears, and knows," but also takes an action and "comes down, goes down, descends, and marches down." And, He has a plan to ירד/come down, according to John E. Hartly in *TWOT*, this verb means: go down, descend, and march down. Many of the verbs that are used in text indicate movement or action.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Ndjerareou, "Exodus," (2006), 85.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid, 86-87, 90.

<sup>151</sup> According to Alt and Cross, this title has attested in the ancient Near Eastern sources. However, this title was used in Genesis (e.g. Gen.31:42, 49:24), and it used with analog way (e.g. Gen 26:24, 31:5; Exod. 15:2). Albrecht Alt, *Essay on Old Testament History and Religion*, trans., R. A. Wilson (Oxford: Oxford, 1966), 3-100. F. M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1973), 3-43. Cited by: Propp, *Exodus 1-18* (1999), *ibid*, 201.

<sup>152</sup> The name has been much studied in the biblical and extra-biblical sources. For more information: Hyatt, *Exodus* (1971), 78. Mark S. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 140. D. N. Freedman, "יהוה Yahweh," *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* 5 (1986), 500-521, 500. Ernst Jenni, "יהוה yhwh Yahweh," *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament* 2 (1997), 522-526, 526.

<sup>153</sup> Rose, "Names of God in the OT," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* 4 (1992) 1001-1012, 1002.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Ndjerareou, "Exodus," (2006), 90. Kaiser, "Exodus," (2006), 365.

<sup>156</sup> Kaiser, "Exodus," (2006), 365-366.

<sup>157</sup> John E. Hartly, "יָרַד," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* 1 (1981), 401-402, 401.

### 3.4.1 Verse 7

YHWH notices and cared about the misery, affliction, suffering, and oppression of His people under the power of the Egyptians (c.f. Exod. 1: 8-21, 2: 23-25; Psa. 106:44; Acts 7:34).<sup>158</sup> The author explains this caring by using three phrases anthropomorphic style, thus presenting YHWH as a human who has eyes to see and ears to hear.

The first phrase is, “I have surely seen the misery of my people who is in Egypt.” (c.f. Exod. 2:25; 1Sam. 9:16; Neh. 9:9; Psa. 106:44; Act 7:25). I agree with Jostein Ådna that presentation and discussion of the central exegetical and theological concepts in the text can help to understand the text.<sup>159</sup> What I see here is that the noun עָנָה/misery is central exegetical concepts because the entire of the text motif is around it.

#### 3.4.1.1 Meaning of עָנָה

According to Marinz Stendbach in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament (TDOT)*, this term עָנָה was used in the Ancient Near East literary as in the Ugaritic texts, and it was used also in the OT. However, the OT’s lexicons distinguish four homonymous roots with the same form עָנָה/‘ānâ/nh.<sup>160</sup> The author of Exod. 3:7 uses the third root, which is used more than 220 times in the OT.<sup>161</sup> The third root means misery, affliction, oppress, hardship, and captivity (e.g. Exod. 3:7).<sup>162</sup> The root is very rich in Hebrew. Hence, this root was used in diverse ways. The first meaning is to oppress (e.g. Psa. 10:12), to live in misery (e.g. Gen. 29:32), and to afflict (e.g. Psa.107:10), to force (e.g. Jud. 16:5), to suffer (e.g. Eccl. 1:13), to rape (e.g. Gen. 34:2), and to live in labor/hardship (e.g. Gen. 41:51).<sup>163</sup> Thus, the verb tells us about “the theology of the oppressed.”<sup>164</sup> Second, “it is used of what one does to his enemy.”<sup>165</sup> ( e.g. Gen. 16:16, Exod.

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<sup>158</sup> Mayers, *Exodus* (2009), 51.

<sup>159</sup> Jostein Ådna, “New Testament Exegesis Basic Steps,” *Pauline Letters and New Testament Theology* (Stavanger: VID Specialized University, Campus Stavanger Spring term (Unpublished study), 2016), 1-3, 3.

<sup>160</sup> Mainz J. Stendbach, “עָנָה,” *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* 11 (1986), 215-230, 215-232.

<sup>161</sup> Leonard J. Coppes, “עָנָה,” *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* 2 (1981), 679-684, 682.

<sup>162</sup> Roland B. Allen, “עָנָה,” *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* 2 (1981), 679-680, 679.

<sup>163</sup> R. Martin- Achhard, “עָנָה, to be destitute,” *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament* 2 (1997), 931-937, 931. Bible Word Study | עָנָה, Exported from Logos Bible Software (12:45 PM February 2, 2017), 1-4,1.

<sup>164</sup> Giessen Gerstbenger, “עָנָה II’ ānâ,” *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* 11 (1986), 230-252, 249.

<sup>165</sup> Coppes, “עָנָה,” (1981), 682.

1:11-12). Consequently, the term tells us about the theology of slavery.<sup>166</sup> Finally, the term was used to express the suffering of the poor (e.g. Lev. 19:10; Isa. 10:2) and the humble (e.g. Exod. 10:3; Num. 13:3).<sup>167</sup> Hence, this verb also speaks about the theology of the poor who became humble.<sup>168</sup>

Thus, the noun עָנָה is very rich, and it implies much exegetical and theological reflection. First, the theology of the oppressed, the meaning of עָנָה does not only explain that Israel suffered through the physical oppression as slaves (e.g. Psa. 22: 25, 82:3; Isa. 51:21),<sup>169</sup> but also clarify that Israel suffered psychologically as a victim<sup>170</sup> and spiritually as broken in spirit<sup>171</sup> and brokenhearted (e.g. psa.109:16; Isa. 61:1).<sup>172</sup> Second, the noun עָנָה illustrates how Israel suffered under the poverty, and became very humble. According to R. Martin- Achhard in *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, the original meaning does not indicate the type of poverty. In its other uses, it does not only mean an economic poverty, but also it means social and spiritual (c.f. Exod. 1: 8- 22).<sup>173</sup> The noun expresses the relationship between YHWH and his people: “the noun refers to a burden of suffering that effects Yahweh.”<sup>174</sup> In the words of Achhard, “Yahweh has mercy on them (Isa. 49:13), he hears their cries (Job. 34:24), he heeds them (Isa. 21:17), does not forget them (Psa. 74:19), and does not conceal his face from them (Job. 36:6), helps them (Psa. 34:7), etc.”<sup>175</sup> Thus, the noun tells us about the suffering of the Israel people in Egypt. The author used the noun מִצְרַיִם (miṣrayim), occurs four times in verses 7, 8 and 10, which describe Egypt as a land of misery, and the Egyptians as slave drivers. The expression אֶת-עַנְיֵי עַמִּי explains this misery as terrible event because it affected the Israelites in multiple ways physically, psychologically, economically, spiritually, and socially.

The second phrase is that: וָאֶזְכַּרְתִּי צְעָקָתָם שְׁמַעְתִּי / I have heard their cry (c.f. Gen. 16:11; Act 7: 25). In this passage, YHWH appears like as a human who has ears to hear the cries of His people. This phrase explains the deep sufferings of the Hebrews by using the direct object

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Achhard, “הָעֲנָה, to be destitute,” (1997), 933.

<sup>168</sup> Gerstbenger, “עָנָה II ‘ānâ,” (1986), 249.

<sup>169</sup> Coppes, “עָנָה,” (1981), 682- 683.

<sup>170</sup> Achhard, “הָעֲנָה, to be destitute,” (1997), 933.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> Gerstbenger, “עָנָה II ‘ānâ,” (1986), 247.

<sup>173</sup> Achhard, “הָעֲנָה, to be destitute,” (1997), 932, 935.

<sup>174</sup> Gerstbenger, “עָנָה II ‘ānâ,” (1986), 240.

<sup>175</sup> Achhard, “הָעֲנָה, to be destitute,” (1997), 933.

אָת־צַעֲקָתָם of the root צעק, which means “to shout in the distress,” “to cry for help,” “to call,” and “call out for help.”<sup>176</sup> According to John Hartely in *TWOT*, this term was used in the OT to express the deepest suffering of terrible distress. For example, the term was used to express the deep pain and suffering of a women who is rapped and her cries for help (2 Kings 2:12). In Jer. 49:21, the term refers to the cries of those who fell, plundered, and ravaged in the war. Thus, the term expresses that the Israelites experienced a deep and heavy bondage under their Egyptians slave drivers.<sup>177</sup> However, the phrase presents a God who not only sees the misery, hears the cries, and knows the sufferings as He promised (Gen. 15:13-14), but also who will come to judge the oppressors (c.f. Gen. 18:21, 19:3)<sup>178</sup>

The third phrase is, יָדַעְתִּי אֶת־מַכְאֲבָיו for I know their suffering (c.f. Exod. 2:25; Acts 7:25). This phrase confirms the terrible situation of the Israelites in Egypt by the Qal perfect tense יָדַעְתִּי which is translated “know.” The root ידע occurring in many stems around 944 times to express the knowledge and observation.<sup>179</sup> Paul Gilchrist explains that: “*yāda* is used of God’s of man (Gen. 18:19; Deut. 34:10) and his ways (Isa. 48:8; Ps 1:6; 37:18), which knowledge begins before birth (Jer. 1:5). God also knows the fowl.”<sup>180</sup> Thus, this phrase depicts YHWH who has a full knowledge about the sufferings of His people.

In short, verse 7 gives an explanation about why YHWH revealed Himself and called Moses.<sup>181</sup> From my perspective, this verse presents one main reason for God’s action: the many aspects of the the misery of the Israelites in Egypt. The portrayal verse 7, and most of the OT’s texts, present of Egypt as negative. Hence, the role of Egypt and the Egyptians in this verse is very negative.

### 3.4.2 Verse 8

Verse 8 takes an additional step: God not only sees the misery, hears the cries, and knows the suffering, but also He will come to liberate His people and give them a land. This verse presents two key acts of God “to liberate,” and “to lead.” The first act is, “to liberate it from the hand of

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<sup>176</sup> Bible Word Study | צַעֲקָה, Exported from Logos Bible Software, 10:57 AM April 06, 2017.

<sup>177</sup> John E. Hartely, “צעק,” *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* 2 (1981), 772, 772.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid

<sup>179</sup> Paul R. Gilchrist, “ידע,” *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* 1 (1981), 366-368, 366.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> Ndjerareou, “Exodus,” (2006), 90.



Egypt.” (c.f. Exod. 10:12-25, 13:3-16, 14:8). The author uses the hif'il infinitive tense of the root נצל, which is translated “to liberate,” “to save,” “to deliver,” and “to rescue.”<sup>182</sup> The expression מִיַּד מִצְרַיִם is a metaphor that expresses “power” (c.f. Gen. 49:8), “domination” (c.f. Gen. 9:2), “authority” (c.f. Gen. 16:6), “strength” (c.f. Deut. 8:17), “oppression” (c.f. Gen. 49:1), and “bondage” (c.f. Exod. 10:12-25). Thus, this metaphor explains how the Hebrews suffered under the rule of the Egyptians.<sup>183</sup> The second act is, “lead it from this land to a good and wide land.” The term אֶרֶץ/הָאָרֶץ occurs three times in the text. Hence, this term is a central exegetical concept in the text.

### 3.4.2.1 Meaning of אֶרֶץ

According to Victor Hamilton in *TWOT*, we can distinguish two Hebrew terms for the land אֶרֶץ ('eres) and אֲדָמָה ('ādāmā). The term אֶרֶץ ('eres) is used 2400 times in the OT, and this means it is the fourth name that was used frequently in the OT. The term אֶרֶץ ('eres) was used with two meanings. The first meaning is the earth in a cosmological sense (e.g. Gen. 11:1). The second meaning is a piece of land (e.g. Gen. 23:15).<sup>184</sup> The term אֲדָמָה ('ādāmā) is used 223 times in the OT that means ground, land, and red soil (e.g. Gen. 2: 7, 9).<sup>185</sup> I agree with Mounther Isaac that the two Hebrew nouns אֶרֶץ ('eres) and אֲדָמָה ('ādāmā) may mean land, ground, and earth. Thus, the distinguishing of meaning depends on the context of the text.<sup>186</sup> However, the author of verse 8 used the first term אֶרֶץ/הָאָרֶץ three times, which is translated “land.”

Thus, YHWH liberates the Hebrews to give them the Promised Land, which is a part of the Abrahamic covenant in which God promises to bless Abraham and make him to be a great nation. A great nation needs land (e.g. Gen. 12: 1-3, 17:1-14). Thus, God's covenant with Abraham (e.g. Exod. 6:4, 8) is the background of verse 8. In this covenant, God will fulfill His promises to Abraham's seeds by letting them go down to Egypt, keepings them there, and then bringing them up to the Promised Land (Gen. 46:4, 28:13-15).<sup>187</sup> McBride explains that:

<sup>182</sup> Walter Kaiser, “נצל,” *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* 2 (1981), 594-595, 594.

<sup>183</sup> Ralph Alexander, “יד,” *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* 1 (1981), 362-364, 362-363.

<sup>184</sup> Victor P. Hamilton, “אֶרֶץ,” *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* 1 (1981), 74-75, 74-75. Isaac, *From Land to Lands, From Eden to the Renewed Earth* (2014), iv.

<sup>185</sup> Leonard J. Coppes, “אֲדָמָה,” *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* 1 (1981), 10-11.

<sup>186</sup> Isaac, *From Land to Lands, From Eden to the Renewed Earth* (2014), v.

<sup>187</sup> McBride, “The God Who Creates and Governs,” (2002), 19.

The remarkable fulsome account of Moses' call and investiture in (Exod. 3:1-4:17, cf. 6:2-8) emphasizes that God's attentiveness to Israel's immediate plight in Egypt is explicable and reliable as part of a long-term agenda of divine patronage (cf.2:23-25).<sup>188</sup>

The text describes the land as “אֶל־אֶרֶץ זָבַת חֵלֶב וְדָבָשׁ/a land flowing with milk and honey.” This expression is used here for the first time in the OT,<sup>189</sup> and then nearly twenty-one more times in the Bible. In addition, this expression is used in the ancient Near East literature as Ugaritic (KTU 1.6.iii.6-7, 12-13), and it also is attested in the Ancient Egyptian literature as “Story of Sinuhe/Tale of Sinuhe.”<sup>190</sup> However, the OT is used this expression to explain the abundance and fertility of the land.<sup>191</sup> From my perspective, this is difficult to understand that because the land is different. It is a naturally poor, hilly and rainy land (Num. 16:13-14; Deut. 11:8-12). Meyers explains that “This idealization is difficult to understand, and none of the theories that have been proposed is compelling.”<sup>192</sup> I think that this expression, “a land flowing with milk and honey,” describes a land, which depends on herding and horticulture. In addition, it is realistic for the people in a desert context that they need the food of desert, which is milk and honey.<sup>193</sup> For example, the Quran used the same expression to describe paradise, for people in the desert context, that has rivers of milk, honey, wine, dates, and grape syrup (e.g. Surah Muhammad 47:15; Surah ar-Rahman 55:68; Surah an-Naba 78:32). Thus, this expression related to its context. Thus, the author of Exodus may be affected by his culture and context. He explains the Promised Land as he have remembered it himself or possibly according to the Hebrews' national memory. In addition, he may have been affected by ancient Near East sources and Egyptian sources.

Exodus 1:8 presents another notion that is difficult to understand. It states that, God determined a specific land, which was occupied by various nations. This text shows that this land was occupied by six nations (MT: Exod. 3: 8), but other texts vary in the number of nations, for example five nations (Num. 13:29),<sup>194</sup> seven nations (Sam and LXX Exod. 3: 8), or ten nations

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<sup>188</sup> Ibid, 19.

<sup>189</sup> Mayers, *Exodus* (2009), 54.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> Durham, *Exodus* (1987), 28.

<sup>192</sup> Mayers, *Exodus* (2009), 54.

<sup>193</sup> דָבָשׁ probably means honey, dates, and grape syrup. A. Dillmann, *Exodus und Leviticus. Kurzgefasstes exegetisches Handbuch* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1880), 29. Cited by: Propp, *Exodus 1-18* (1999), 202. Earl S. Kaland, “דָבָשׁ,” *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* 1 (1981), 181-182, 181-182. Propp, *Exodus 1-18* (1999), 202.

<sup>194</sup> Kaiser, “Exodus,” (2006), 367.

(Gen. 15:19-21). The list of the six nations, however, occurs 27 times in the OT.<sup>195</sup> I agree with Hyatt that it is difficult to trace the origins of the six nations. Although this topic is beyond the scope of this paper, a few phrases about each nation may help to clarify the text.<sup>196</sup> The Canaanites were specifically the inhabitants of the Valley of Jordan. In general, the name was used for the Semitic dwellers in the West of Jordan. The Hittites were the inhabitants of cities that could be considered as small kingdoms in Northern Syria and Anatolia. The Amorites were the dwellers of the Amurru kingdom in the hills of Syria and Northern Palestine. According to Hyatt, the scholars cannot locate or identify the Perizzites. The Hivites were the inhabitants of Shechem. The Jebusites were the dwellers in Jerusalem before it was occupied by the Hebrews.<sup>197</sup> There are many questions arise here regarding these peoples. For example, were these original inhabitants guilty in some way? What ways to happen to the six, seven, or ten nations? The text does not give address these questions directly, but the author of Exodus offers some ideas (or answers) in chapter 23:

When my angel goes in front of you, and brings you to the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, and I blot them out, 24 you shall not bow down to their gods, or worship them, or follow their practices, but you shall utterly demolish them and break their pillars in pieces. (Exod. 23:23-24).

I think it is a traumatic answer. It does not address general questions about the violence in the Old Testament.<sup>198</sup> The text leaves us with these unanswered questions. In addition, the reality of fulfillment of the text is unclear. On the one hand, the text tells us that God will give Israel the land. On the other hand, the book of Judges tells us that the conquest of the land took a long time, and the land was not completely conquered. Christopher Wright supports my claim and he explains that “the process of subduing the inhabitants of the land was far from completed and went on for considerable time, and that many of the original nations continued to live alongside the Israelites.”<sup>199</sup>

In short, verse 8 adds another reason that God reveals Himself to and calls Moses. The reason is that YHWH liberates His people to give them a land. By analyzing verse 8, I have come to believe that there would not be liberation without the land. There would not be a land

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<sup>195</sup> Mayers, *Exodus* (2009), 54.

<sup>196</sup> Hyatt, *Exodus* (1971), 73, 87.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid*, 73.

<sup>198</sup> Mayers, *Exodus* (2009), 54.

<sup>199</sup> Christopher Wright, *The God I Don't Understand* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 88.

without liberation. There would also not be liberation without misery. Thus, I agree with Carol Meyers that in order for liberate the people of Israel to be liberated from slavery, they do not only need a liberator (Moses), but also they need a land to be their home.<sup>200</sup> I also agree with Kaiser who argues that “The promise of the land could only be fulfilled if Israel was delivered from Egypt and brought back into the Canaan land, which, had been promised to them (e.g. Gen. 12:7, 15:13-16).”<sup>201</sup>

### 3.4.3 Verses 9-10

Many scholars have debated these two verses. Some scholars, such as Noth, argue that the reason these two verses repeat the two previous verses is the change of sources.<sup>202</sup> Some scholars argue that these two verses function as a conclusion that confirms and summarizes the previous verses. Kaiser’s claim about “a double conclusion”<sup>203</sup> is an example of this. Finally, some scholars, such as Hyatt and Clements ignored this implication. From my perspective, I cannot agree with Noth’s claim because it does not make sense that the same source used the adverb *וַיִּשְׁמַע* in the beginning of both verses. In addition, it is difficult to distinguish between the sources of Exod. 3:7-10 because of the editing process of the JE editor.<sup>204</sup> According to Kaiser’s claim, it makes some sense because the repeating is an assertive style in the Semitic languages such as in Arabic. Therefore, the double conclusion does not make sense because of using the adverb *וַיִּשְׁמַע* in the beginning of verse 9 and 10. In addition, the confirm style repeats a word or a phrase to confirm a meaning, but it does not repeat both verses again.

From my viewpoint, these two verses seem to just be a repeat of verses 7-8 because they do not add any new details. As a Semitic reader, I recognize that the repetition of ideas between verses 7-8 and verses 9-10 is the Semitic assertive style. Thus, I think that these two possibilities are equals. In addition, as a scholarly reader, I believe that the two verses are vital in the text because they not only assert and confirm the situation of the Hebrews in Egypt but also add new details. I will support my claim in the following exegesis of the two verses.

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<sup>200</sup> Meyers, *Exodus* (2009), 54.

<sup>201</sup> Kaiser, “Exodus,” (2006), 335-336.

<sup>202</sup> Noth, *Exodus: a Commentary* (1962), 41-42.

<sup>203</sup> Kaiser, “Exodus,” (2006), 365.

<sup>204</sup> Propp, *Exodus 1-18* (1999), 192-193.

Verse 9 explains some details about the terrible situation of the Israelites. First, God hears the cries of the Israelites. I grew up in the Egyptian culture that is similar to or part of Semitic culture. Thus, I know that it is not easy to cry because crying is a shameful act. That means the Hebrews must have experienced severer of sufferings to be brought to the level of crying, which is a deep expression of self-pity and shame. In addition, the author used the noun בְּנֵי/sons in plural form that means this misery was not limited to one group or class, but affected all of the Hebrews. Furthermore, the author use the metaphor “has come to Me,” to produce an understanding in the mind of the reader about the severity and depth of crying. The author confirms this metaphor by using the Qal verb רָאָה in the perfect tense. Secondly, “I have seen the oppression which the Egyptians are oppressing them.” This phrase explains that God has surly seen their misery (c.f. Exod. 2:25, 3:7; 1Sam 9:16; Act 7: 25). The root ראה occurred 1281 in the OT, which the author used the verb Qal in perfect tense רָאִיתִי.<sup>205</sup> According to William White, “the extended and metaphorical sense in the Qal include to regard, perceive, feel, understand.”<sup>206</sup> Thus, this phrase explains that God does not only see, but also He observes, understands, and feels the situation of His people.

Verse 10 is pivotal because it moves us from the vision of liberation to the mission of liberation וְעַתָּה/and now, from the call of Moses to the act of Moses לֵךְ/go, from a nation without deity to the God of the Hebrews who sends the liberator וְאֶשְׁלְחֶךָ/and I will send you. I believe that this verse explains three facts. First, God sends Moses to the Pharaoh to bring out His people from Egypt because of their misery. Second, the Hebrews do not belong to Pharaoh the king and the god of the Egyptians, but they belong to YHWH the king and the God of the Hebrews. Third, the Hebrews do not belong to Egypt, but they belong to the Promised Land, the gift of YHWH.

In short, the text gives an explanation about why YHWH reveals Himself and calls Moses. Verse 7 presents the first reason as the misery of the Israelites in Egypt. Verse 8 presents the second reason as YHWH’s liberating His people in order to give them a Land. Thus, verse 9-10 confirms that the situation of Israel in Egypt requires divine solution.<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>205</sup> Bible Word Study | ראה, Exported from Logos Bible Software (12:18 PM April 07, 2017), 1-10, 1.

<sup>206</sup> William White, “ראה,” *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* 2 (1981), 823-826, 823.

<sup>207</sup> Kaiser, “Exodus,” (2006), 365.

### 3.5 Evaluation

In this section, I will shortly present my evaluation of the exegetical traditional analysis of Exodus 3:7-10. As I reflect on my exegetical analysis of Exodus, there are three issues that require special attention. The three issues are: “scholarly neglect of Egypt as a theme in the text,” “the negative portrayal of the role of Egypt,” and “scholarly neglect of the relationship between Egypt and the Promised Land.” However, my main concern in this thesis is the role of Egypt in the text, so I will give especial attention to the first and second points.

#### 3.5.1 Omission Egypt as Theme

I think that scholars have neglect Egypt as a specific subject in the text and in Exodus. I believe that Egypt in the text and in Exodus is a main topic because the author uses the noun מִצְרַיִם/Egypt four times in this text. In the entire of Exodus, the author used the noun מִצְרַיִם/Egypt 170 times.<sup>208</sup> This neglect does not happen only in the scholarship of Exodus, but also in most scholarship of the OT.<sup>209</sup> For 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, there were not much books that have been written to discuss the relationship between the OT and Egypt as John Currid explains: “most of the works that discuss Egypt and the Old Testament were written no later than the early part of the twentieth century.”<sup>210</sup> According to Currid, there are three reasons for the lack of studies of the relationship between the OT and Egypt. First, there are many scholars who are not convinced that the historical and cultural relationship between Egypt and the OT was solid. Second, many studies have focused on the relationship between the OT and Mesopotamia because some OT’s scholars are convinced that the OT borrowed many materials from Mesopotamian literature. Third, Egyptian archeology does not confirm OT events. For example, there is no archeological proof about the sojourn of the Hebrews in Egypt or about the exodus event.<sup>211</sup> On the one hand, I agree with Currid that Egypt in the OT is “a neglected subject.”<sup>212</sup> On the other hand, I think that the reasons for this neglect are weak. According to the first reason, as I mentioned previously, the historical and cultural relationship between the OT and Egypt was both negative and positive throughout the history of the OT. Regarding the second reason, that the OT borrows much

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<sup>208</sup> Bible Word Study | מִצְרַיִם, Exported from Logos Bible Software 6 (12:10 PM February 2, 2017), 1-3, 1.

<sup>209</sup> For more information: Currid, *Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament* (1999), 23-32.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid, 23.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid, 23-27.

<sup>212</sup> Currid, *Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament* (1999), 23.

material from Mesopotamian literature, I would argue that the OT also borrows much material from Egyptian literature. Regarding the third reason, archeology of Palestine, Iran, and Iraq also does not confirm OT events, just as is the case of Egypt. Thus, I believe that these reasons are not good excuses to neglect studying a topic as significant as Egypt. However, I hope scholars will give more especial attention to Egypt in the OT for many other reasons also. Egypt significant part in the history of the OT; The land of Egypt was a theater of many OT narratives; The Law was given to Moses in Egypt; The Hebrew tribe became a nation in Egypt; YHWH reveals Himself in Egypt; Most of the salvation acts of YHWH happened in Egypt, such as the plagues and the exodus; The OT borrowed many materials from Egyptian literature; And, Egypt had a both positive and negative roles and relationship role with Israel. Consequently, I agree with Tewoldemedhin Habtu that “in fact, no other land is mentioned so often as Egypt in the OT.”<sup>213</sup> Thus, Egypt and the Egyptians made a major contribution to the Hebrew history.

### **3.5.2 Negative Role of Egypt**

I believe that scholars not studied this topic enough. Most scholars agree with the negative role or portrayal of Egypt, but would like to see scholars examine this image or role in the light of the whole image or role of Egypt in the OT. Because of this neglect of study of Egypt, I am not convinced with the prevailing exegetical traditional analysis regarding Egypt because it does not consider the whole image about the exodus motif. I believe that this text is a part of a larger narrative. Thus, the motif should be understood within a consideration of the fuller details of the complete narrative of the OT. In other words, this text looks like a piece of puzzle that, if we would like to understand its role, we should put it in its place with the rest of the pieces. I support my claim with three arguments. First, if we understand the role of Egypt within this text alone, the result will be only a tiny part of the reality because there are hundreds of verses that speak about Egypt. Second, insistence on using this text alone presents a problem not only in the OT but also in OT scholarship in the Egyptian church context. In the OT, Exod. 3:7-10 became a key text for the authors of the OT, and the liberation motif was used hermeneutically by them. Thus, as the text became a basis for the liberation narratives in the OT, the negative image of Egypt became reinforced as primarily a slave land, and the Egyptians became a negative paradigm for oppressing other people. In OT s scholarship, also this is a key text for many biblical scholars

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<sup>213</sup> Habtu, “The Images of Egypt in the Old Testament,” (2001), 55.

who used it as a main reference for the theme of liberation, and they have used Egypt as paradigm of a slave land. Thus, most scholars portray Egypt negatively. Third, if we insist on reading the text alone, we will lose many important details. For example, the text does not provide the reasons for Israel's misery. Therefore, if we make the effort to understand the role of Egypt within the whole biblical narrative, we may find a solution for this dilemma. I will support this claim with the following points.

First, I believe that we should read the text in the light of the whole biblical narrative because this text caused an embarrassment for the Egyptian reader and interpreters who completely ignored to discuss this subject in their interpretations such as Anṭūniyūs Fākery,<sup>214</sup> Yohānā al-Mākāry,<sup>215</sup> and Tadrous Y Malaty.<sup>216</sup> What's more, these verses did not only challenge the Egyptian Christians but also the Egyptian Jews. I will support my claim by two examples about the Egyptian Jews in the Egyptian context. The First example, before Christianity, the LXX translates verse 7 in this way: “and the Lord said to Moses, I have surely seen the mistreatment of my people who are in Egypt, I have heard their cry t because of their taskmaster, for I know their pain.”<sup>217</sup> We can see that the LXX translates “misery” to “mistreatment,” “slave drivers” to “taskmaster,” and “suffering” to “pain.” The second example is after Christianity, with Sa’dīyā ibn Yūsuf Fayyūmī (882-942AC) who was an Egyptian well-known rabbi, Jewish philosopher, and an exegete in the Abbasid Caliphate. Fayyūmī is considered the pioneer of Judeo-Arabic literature. He translates the Torah from Hebrew into Arabic with exegesis.<sup>218</sup> Fayyūmī translated verse 7 in this way, “Then Allāh said, I have seen the weakness of my people who in Egypt, I have heard their cry from towards of their taskmaster, I know their aches.”<sup>219</sup> We can see clearly how Fayyūmī translated “misery” to “weakness,” “slave drivers” to “taskmaster,” and “suffering” to “aches.” We can see clearly that

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<sup>214</sup> Anṭūniyūs Fākery, *Tafsīr li-Sifr al-Khurūj*. [http://st-takla.org/pub\\_Bible-Interpretations/Holy-Bible-Tafsir-01-Old-Testament/Father-Antonious-Fekry/02-Sefr-El-Khoroug/Tafseer-Sefr-El-Khroug\\_\\_01-Chapter-03.html](http://st-takla.org/pub_Bible-Interpretations/Holy-Bible-Tafsir-01-Old-Testament/Father-Antonious-Fekry/02-Sefr-El-Khoroug/Tafseer-Sefr-El-Khroug__01-Chapter-03.html). (Accessed 31 March, 2017).

<sup>215</sup> al-Mākāry, *Tafsīr Sifr al-Khurūj* (2014), 115-116.

<sup>216</sup> Tadrous Y Malaty, *Tafsīr Ktab al-Khurūj*. [http://st-takla.org/pub\\_Bible-Interpretations/Holy-Bible-Tafsir-01-Old-Testament/Father-Tadros-Yacoub-Malaty/02-Sefr-El-Khoroug/Tafseer-Sefr-El-Khroug\\_\\_01-Chapter-03.html#3](http://st-takla.org/pub_Bible-Interpretations/Holy-Bible-Tafsir-01-Old-Testament/Father-Tadros-Yacoub-Malaty/02-Sefr-El-Khoroug/Tafseer-Sefr-El-Khroug__01-Chapter-03.html#3). [دعوة موسى](#). (Accessed 31 March, 2017).

<sup>217</sup> BibleWorks 9 Software for Biblical Exegesis Research; Program and Databases DVD (Norfolk, Va: Bible Works, 2011).

<sup>218</sup> Sa’dīyā ibn Jā’ūn ibn Yūsuf Fayyūmī,, Yūsuf Drīnbūrj, Sa’īd ‘Aṭīyah ‘Alī Muṭāwi’, Aḥmad ‘Abd al-Maqṣūd, Ḥasan Ḥanafī, and Aḥmad Maḥmūd Huwaydī. *Tafsīr al-Tawrah bi-al-‘Arabīyah: tarīkh tarjamāt asfār al-Yahūd al-muqaddasah wa-dawādu ‘uhā* (al-Qāhirah: al-Markaz al-Qawmī lil-Tarjamah, 2015), front page, 1-80.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid, 201.



this verse challenged the Egyptian Jews and the Christian Egyptian by portraying Egypt with a negative Image.

Second, when we read the text in context of the whole OT narrative about Egypt, we can recognize that there is a tension in the OT's texts because they portray Egypt both negatively and positively. Thus, the negative and the positive image are two sides of one coin. Hence, we should understand the role of Egypt by seeing both sides because one side gives only half of the reality. I agree with most scholars, such as Ringgren, who argue that this tension may depend on the nature of "the politico-historical"<sup>220</sup> relationship between Israel and Egypt in each specific situation.

Third, from my perspective, on the one hand, I believe that Israelites were not slaves most of their time in Egypt. Instead, the Israelites were refugees. I will give many reasons to support my claim. Genesis used the word "Egypt" around 200 times in four forms, and it always portrayed Egypt positively as a "land of refuge" from the famines for Abram (Gen. 12:10, 19-20) and for Jacob with his family (Gen. 46:1-7).<sup>221</sup> The Egyptians did not take the Israelites to Egypt as slaves in any armed conflicts, but Hebrews came to Egypt to ask for food. As an Egyptian, I have studied about the people, culture, and history of my country; I therefore, I can assert that the Egyptians were very generous with the Israelites. They gave them the rights of refugees thousands of years before the UN formulated these rights (1951, 1952, and 1984).<sup>222</sup> For example, the Hebrews had rights of: residency (Gen. 47:1-6), ownership of land (Gen. 47: 1-12), possession of houses (Exod. 12:22-23), foods (Gen. 47:12; Num.11:5-6), and work (Gen. 41:41-44, 47:6). Thus, I believe that the text teaches us more about the theology of offering refuge than the theology of oppression. Nowadays, we may learn from the text how we can deal with refugees, as the text explains that YHWH is the God of refugees who says "I have heard... I know their sufferings." (Exod. 3:7; c.f. Deut. 24:14-22). On the other hand, in the later time of

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<sup>220</sup> Ringgren, "מִצְרַיִם miṣrayim," (1997), 520-521.

<sup>221</sup> Bible Word Study | מִצְרַיִם, Exported from Logos Bible Software 6, (1:34 PM March 07, 2017), 1-3,1.

<sup>222</sup> For more information: the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), The 1951 Refugee Convention <http://www.unhcr.org/1951-refugee-convention.html>. (Accessed on 4 April, 2017). The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), Identity Documents for Refugees Identity Documents for Refugees: EC/SCP/33(20 July 1984). <http://www.unhcr.org/excom/scip/3ae68cce4/identity-documents-refugees.html>. (Accessed on 4 April, 2017).

Israel in Egypt, Israel suffered under Egyptian oppression for “politico-historical”<sup>223</sup> reasons as the book of Exodus explains:

Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. <sup>9</sup>He said to his people, “Look, the Israelite people are more numerous and more powerful than we. <sup>10</sup>Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, or they will increase and, in the event of war, join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land.” (Exod. 1:8-10).

Thus, we can see that the positive attitude of all the pharaohs was positive except this Pharaoh and Pharaoh the exodus. Hence, we should also distinguish between the attitude of the Egyptians that were very good and generous, and the attitude of the political system that was negative in a later time for political reasons. Thus, it is not fair to say that Egypt is the land of slavery; it makes more sense to say that Egypt is a land of shelter that made political mistakes.

Furthermore, even the central negative expressions about Egypt like “the house of slavery” and “the iron-smelter” that shaped the OT; indicate a positive experience because they explain the act of YHWH’s salvation. Holter explains that:

These expressions reflect central aspects of the narrative traditions about the experience in Egypt; negatively, the traditions emphasize the experience of suffering and humiliation (cf. Exodus 1-11), and positively, they identify these experiences as the background for another and central experience of Israel, that is the salvation by the hand of Yahweh (cf. Exodus 12-14).<sup>224</sup>

In addition, I agree with Mattá al-Miskin who argue that the Egyptians supported, educated, formulated, trained, and taught the Hebrews all of the tremendous Egyptian knowledge. Mattá al-Miskin explain that:

The people of Israel who came down from Palestine as a dry branch or sprig that needs an intensive care to grow very well. God sent it to Egypt, and was planted in the land of Pharaohs to drink wisdom, drink the milk of arts, be well-disciplined by the glories of Pharaohs, and to grow and flourish on the banks of the Nile until it rooted deeply and became prepared to be transferred from Egypt by God. In Egypt also, God planted the church of Copts that was the teacher of world. Egypt was the field that God adapted to himself.<sup>225</sup>

According to, Mattá al-Miskin’s claim, Christians and Jews should recognize that Egypt contributed greatly to the formation of Israel in God’s historical salvation plan.

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<sup>223</sup> Ringgren, “מִצְרַיִם miṣrayim,” (1997), 520-521.

<sup>224</sup> Holter, *Contextualized Old Testament Scholarship in Africa* (2008), 57.

<sup>225</sup> Mattá al-Miskin, *al-Madkhal li-Sharḥ Injīl al-Qiddīs Yūḥannā: dirāsah wa-taḥlīl* (al-Qāhirah: Dār Majallat Murqus, 1989), 271-272.

Finally, the OT does not only portray Egypt with a negative image, but also portrays all the nations and even Israel with a negative image. For example, the OT expresses the tension between the positive and negative images of Israel as Egypt.<sup>226</sup> In fact, the OT also portrays Israel negatively even as Egypt.

### 3.5.3 Ignoring the Relationship between Egypt and the Land

The third point is that, most scholars do not focus on the relationship between the negative image of Egypt and the Promised Land. I observed that the negative image of Egypt and the Promised Land are so closely connected that they may be considered as two sides of one coin. Even before the exodus motif, Genesis presents the promise that God will guide his offspring from the land of slavery and gave them a new land (Gen. 15: 13-20). Thus, without the negative image of Egypt there would not be liberation, and without liberation there would not be land. That is clear not only in my text, but also from the beginning of Exodus. The author of the first chapter presents the background of the Egyptian oppression of the Israelites (1:1-22), the second chapter presents the background of the liberator (Moses), and the third chapter makes the connection between liberation from slavery and the conquest of the land. There are some scholars who support my claim that these two motifs of liberation from slavery and conquest of the land form single narrative; one example is Mitri Raheb, who argues about “the liberation conquest narrative.”<sup>227</sup> The land and its implications have been challenging to Egyptian readers for many reasons. For example, the question of why God gave the land of other nations to His people Israel. In

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<sup>226</sup> In the Pentateuch, Israel seeks for other gods, and always God is angry because their deeds. the Pentateuch presents the Hebrews who deserve God’s Judgment (e.g. Exod. 32:1-10 ). As the Pentateuch identifies Egypt with very negative expressions, the Pentateuch identifies Israel with very negative expressions like “they are a stiff-necked people.” (e.g. Exod. 32:9 ). The Former Prophets present also the negative image of Israel that the Pentateuch experienced it. For example, Israelites rejected God as their King (e.g. 1 Samuel 8:4-8 ). Israel, especially the north kingdom, sinned and made deeds against God. The Hebrews built and set up sacred stones and Asherah poles on high places. They worshiped idols (e.g. 2 Kings 17:7-11). Thus, God is angry, and will judge Israel (e.g. 2 Kings 17:18-20). The Latter prophets also identify Israel with a negative image. For example, Israel is as unfaithful, whore, and adulteress wife (e.g. Jer. 3:1-25; Ezek. 16:1-63; Amos 2:1-23), and Israel has done only evil against the God (e.g. Jer. 32:30 ). In addition, there are many judgments against Israel and the Israelites as Egypt and the Egyptians (e.g. Isa. 1:10-11, Amos 9:8). In the Writings, the negative image of Israel attested such as Israel did not keep God’s covenant, refused to live by his law, forgot God and His words, did the evil deeds, and they did not remember the power of His salvation (e.g. Psa. 50:17-22, 78: 10-11, 42). Thus, Israel is like Egypt, both of them have a negative and a positive image, and like Egypt the OT expresses the tension between the negative and the positive image of Israel. John Ritenbaugh et al., Bible verses about Israel's Unfaithfulness (From Forerunner Commentary).<http://www.bibletools.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Topical.show/RTD/cgg/ID/3358/Israels-Unfaithfulness.htm> (Accessed on 19 March, 2017).

<sup>227</sup> Raheb, *I Am a Palestinian Christian* (1995), 81-91.

addition, the conquest of the land is very connected to three other issues in the OT: “violence,”<sup>228</sup> “Holy War,”<sup>229</sup> and “ban.”<sup>230</sup> Thus, I agree with Walter Brueggemann who argues that the land is not only a promise, but also it is a problem.<sup>231</sup> Thus, for many reasons, I think that this relationship requires more study from biblical scholars.

### 3.6 Conclusion

I conclude my discussion about the exegetical analysis of Exodus 3:7-10 in the following points. First, the text marks many transitions: from Israel as a tribe into Israel as a nation, from an unknown deity into a personal known deity, from a personal deity into a national deity, from the Abrahamic covenant into the fulfillment of the covenant in Abraham’s offspring.

Second, the author of verses 7-10 gives an explanation about why YHWH reveals Himself and calls Moses. The text presents two main reasons that are closely connected to and support one another: the first reason is the misery in verse 7; the second one is the land in verse 8, and verses 9-10 confirm the connection.

Third, the text resolves a problem in both the past and the present. In the past, the text resolved a problem of the misery and suffering of the Hebrews under the power of the Egyptians. The text shows us how the people of Israel experienced physical, spiritual, political, psychological, social, and economic miseries under their Egyptians taskmasters. Thus, the liberation motif emerged and became a significant sign for Israel in its later history. The Hebrews identified themselves as the people of Exodus, and they recognized YHWH as the liberator God. In every crisis, Israel asked for a “new exodus,” such as their in exile (Isa 43: 1-6). In the current time, the text and its motifs are not considered as only historical, but are still active in both Judaism and Christianity.<sup>232</sup> In Judaism, Jews have used this text to seek a new liberation in every crisis. For example, in the Holocaust, Jews sought a new liberation from Hitler’s Nazi system.

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<sup>228</sup> For more information: John J. Collins, *Does the Bible Justify Violence?* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2004), 2).

<sup>229</sup> For more information: Reuven Firestone, “Conceptions of Holy War in Biblical and Qur’anic Tradition,” *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (spring, 1996), pp. 99-123. Kasys, *Why Do not We Read the Book That Christ Read It?* (2010), 91- 92.

<sup>230</sup> For more information: Kasys, *Why Do not We Read the Book That Christ Read It?* (2010), 91- 92). Collins, *Does the Bible Justify Violence?* (2004), 9-10, 91- 92.

<sup>231</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *The Land: Place As Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 1.

<sup>232</sup> Raheb, *I Am a Palestinian Christian* (1995), 81.

And, they saw YHWH as the liberator God who liberated them from the suffering in Europe to the Promised Land in Palestine.<sup>233</sup> In Christianity, the text has played a major role in the formulation: Liberation Theology, Theology of liberation, Migration Theology, and Minority Theology.

Fourth, the text presents a dilemma, which is the negative image of Egypt and the Egyptians in both past and present. In the past, the text was used by the Bible's authors as the "key text" or "epicenter" about God's salvation plan to his people. In addition, it shapes all other redemptive biblical narratives in the OT and in the NT.<sup>234</sup> Hence, as the text became a basis for the liberation narratives in the OT, the negative image of Egypt in the Bible became that of the slave land. This image has presented a challenge to the Egyptian readers in understanding the OT in the past and in the present time. In addition, I believe that just as there would be no liberation without land, there would also be no land without liberation, and there would no liberation without misery. Thus, the motif of land needs the motif of liberation, and the motif of liberation needs the motif of misery.

The question of this chapter is, how Exodus 3: 7-10 can be read from a consciously Egyptian perspective, exegetically with regard to the role of Egypt in this text and in the OT. As I have shown, this text has challenged Jewish and Christian Egyptians in the past and in the present time. It is complicated for Egyptians to read this text from a consciously Egyptian perspective because, as the exegetical analysis has shown, this text portrays Egypt with a negative image. Hence, the role of Egypt and the Egyptians in this text is negative that was generated from "politico-historical" reasons as the Exodus explains (Exod. 1:8-10).<sup>235</sup> In addition, a deep reading of the text shows us that the OT also portrays Egypt in a positive light. When we examined the role of Egypt in the text within the whole biblical narrative and in light of the positive roles and images of Egypt in the OT, we could see that the message of text is not about the land of suffering, but about the people who are suffering. Raheb supports my claim when he argues that Egypt is not a geographical space, but rather a term for the situation of suffering people in the whole world who need the theology of liberation.<sup>236</sup> Thus, the text does

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<sup>233</sup> Ibid, 83.

<sup>234</sup> Martin, *Bound for the Promised Land* (2015), 77- 78.

<sup>235</sup> Ringgren, "מִצְרַיִם miṣrayim," (1997), 520-521.

<sup>236</sup> Raheb, *I Am a Palestinian Christian* (1995), 89.

not only teach us about the theology of the Hebrews as refugees from their slavery, but also teaches us about the theology of offering refuge, and offers Egypt as a positive example.

## **Chapter Four**

### **HERMENEUTICAL ANALYSIS**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

How Exodus 3: 7-10 can be read from a consciously Egyptian perspective? In order to answer this question, I divide it into two questions. In the previous chapter, I examined the first question. In the current chapter, I will examine the second question that is, how Exodus 3: 7-10 can be read from a consciously Egyptian perspective, hermeneutically with regard to the role of the text for contemporary ordinary Egyptian reader. In order to answer this question, I will use the contextual method, which is a practical and an effective tool to analyze the mode of “in front of the text.” Hence, this chapter consists of three main sections: general observations and procedures, hermeneutical analysis, and analysis and reflection.

#### **4.2 General Observations and Procedures**

Individual interviews are my main tool for collecting contextual data. Interviews with sample of ten Egyptian pastors from different areas of Egypt and is the base of my field work. I chose the ten pastors for several reasons. They are well-educated and active in church and society. Most of them are doing a good job of leading the church and establishing a good relationship with the Egyptian society, in which the majority is Muslim. In addition, these young pastors are sufficiently aware of the different situation not only in Egypt but also in the Middle East.

I classified the ten informants of my sample into two groups. The first group is the “city group (CI).” It is made up of pastors who work in a city. The second group is the “village group (VI).” It is made up of pastors who work in a village. The reason behind the classification is to explore whether the local environment has any special impact on the pastors’ ways of understanding and interpreting the text.

The main part of the interviews consists of gathering some of the different views from my informants as to how they interpret and understand Exodus 3:7-10 in the Egyptian context. This is to help me to answer the main question of my thesis.

### 4.3 Hermeneutical Analysis

I would like to summarize, analyze, and reflect on the different views that I got from my informants about the text. I will begin by presenting the informants' views, and will follow that with my analysis and reflection on them, and my applications to the context. In the five following points, I will present the various views of the informants.

First, most of my informants viewed the text as a story of God's salvation from slavery, oppression, and humiliation.<sup>237</sup> The text explains that God hears the cry of the Hebrews, and he feels the suffering.<sup>238</sup> The text tells how God interacts with the Hebrews and displays His power to get them out of slavery and establish justice.<sup>239</sup> In addition, this is a story of revealing God's mission and vision of saving His people for His glory.<sup>240</sup> In other words, the liberation motif is the story of fulfillment of God's promise.<sup>241</sup>

Second, some of my informants saw the text as presenting Egypt and Egyptians with a negative role or image. Egypt was the land of slavery, and Egyptians were a bad people who oppressed the Israelites and gave them a hard time in Egypt.<sup>242</sup> Thus, these informants perceive the text as mirroring the difficult and challenging time of God's people in Egypt. The informants shared their impressions that it is not only this text that presents Egypt and the Egyptians people with negative images, but also that the OT as a whole is consistently presenting this image. In addition, they said that the OT seems consistently to present conflicts between the God of Israel and the Egyptian gods.<sup>243</sup> CI 1.1 draws attention to this sense between the Egyptian and the OT. He explained that the OT seems to be against us as Christians in Egypt today, because Egypt was the land of slavery and the Egyptians were slave drivers. At the same time, we should believe the

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<sup>237</sup> Informant VI 2.5, Oral Interview By Medhat Youssef, el-Minia state, July 14, 2016. Informant CI 1.1, Oral Interview By Medhat Youssef, Cairo, June 9, 2016. Informant VI 2.2, Oral Interview By Medhat Youssef, el-Minia state, June 21, 2016. Informant CI 1.2, Oral Interview By Medhat Youssef, el-Minia state, June 11, 2016. Informant CI 1.3, Oral Interview By Medhat Youssef, Cairo, June 15, 2016. Informant CI 1.4, Oral Interview By Medhat Youssef, Cairo, June 17, 2016. Informant VI 2.4, Oral Interview By Medhat Youssef, Cairo, July 4, 2016.

<sup>238</sup> Informant VI 2.5.

<sup>239</sup> Informant VI 2.1, Oral Interview By Medhat Youssef, el-Minia state, July 15, 2016. Informant CI 1.3. Informant CI 1.4. Informant VI 2.4. Informant VI 2.3, Oral Interview By Medhat Youssef, el-Minia state, June 20, 2016.

<sup>240</sup> Informant VI 2.3. Informant VI 2.2. Informant CI 1.5, Oral Interview By Medhat Youssef, Cairo, June 25, 2016.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid.

<sup>242</sup> Informant CI 1.2. Informant CI 1.5.

<sup>243</sup> Informant CI 1.2. Informant CI 1.1, Oral Interview By Medhat Youssef, Cairo, June 9, 2016.



OT.<sup>244</sup> CI 1.5 also emphasized this image, which has created a sensitive relationship between the Egyptian and the Israelites today.<sup>245</sup>

Third, some informants understood the text as a mirror that reflects the persecution of the Christian minority in Egypt and in the Middle East.<sup>246</sup> The informants provided many similarities and differences between the current situation of Egyptian Christians and the ancient situation of the Hebrews. There are many similarities. VI 2.1 argues that the way the Egyptian majority in the past dealt with its minority Israelites is the same as the way the present majority is dealing with the Christian minority: persecution.<sup>247</sup> According to VI 2.5, both the ancient and the modern political systems did/do not hear the voice of the minority. In both cases, the majority has rejected the request of the minority to worship their God.<sup>248</sup> Informant VI 2.2 argued that the Hebrews, as the Egyptian Christians now, were persecuted for two reasons: politically and religious,<sup>249</sup> but VI 2.3 argued that the Hebrews, as the Egyptian Christians, were/are persecuted for only one reason, that is a religious ground.<sup>250</sup> VI 2.3 draws attention to situation of the Hebrews which was the same as for the Egyptian Christians today, of not having any rights or freedom, especially religious freedom.<sup>251</sup> He said that, “Unfortunately, we are not seen in the light of the principle of humanity, but we are seen according to our backgrounds and our beliefs.”<sup>252</sup> There are also many differences. VI 2.4, CI 1.1, and CI 1.3 argued that the Hebrews were slaves in a strange land, while in contrast the Christians are not slaves in their land, rather are the aboriginals of the land.<sup>253</sup> The Hebrews were oppressed for political, religious, and racial reasons, while, in contrast, the Christians are now oppressed for religious reasons only.<sup>254</sup> VI 2.2 asked why God has not heard the cry of the Christians suffering persecution in Egypt and the Middle East as He heard the cries of the Israelites.<sup>255</sup> CI 1.3 emphasized the fact that the Egyptian Christians seek “a new exodus” that is different from “the old exodus,”<sup>256</sup> because as he

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<sup>244</sup> Informant CI 1.2.

<sup>245</sup> Informant CI 1.5.

<sup>246</sup> Informant VI 2.2. Informant VI 2.4.

<sup>247</sup> Informant VI 2.1.

<sup>248</sup> Informant VI 2.5.

<sup>249</sup> Informant VI 2.2.

<sup>250</sup> Informant VI 2.3.

<sup>251</sup> Informant VI 2.3.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid.

<sup>253</sup> Informant VI 2.4. Informant CI 1.1.

<sup>254</sup> Informant VI 2.4. Informant CI 1.1. Informant VI 2.5.

<sup>255</sup> Informant VI 2.2.

<sup>256</sup> Informant CI 1.3.

said, “Egypt is our land and our ancestors’ land, so we would not like to leave our own country, but God has many ways to save His people.”<sup>257</sup>

Fourth, there were three views among my informants about the conquest motif in the text. Some informants saw the conquest motif to mean that God possessed the land and had the right to give it to His people. In this view, the conquest motif is a way of God’s promise being fulfilled.<sup>258</sup> The story is telling us about how God stands against the evil pagans who are not following His commands.<sup>259</sup> The conquest motif is a story of restoration, of God restoring His people from a foreign land to their homeland.<sup>260</sup> The second group, among my informants saw the conquest motif as a story which should be understood in its original context and culture. One important view at that time was the idea that every nation has its own god who fights with them and wins for them. Thus, the conquest motif tells us about the God of Israel who fights with them and wins for them.<sup>261</sup> The third view of, some of the informants was that conquest motif linked to the Arab-Israeli conflict. They see the conquest motif as a story of God’s discrimination. These informants were asking why: in the past, God expel the different peoples groups from their own land that the land could to be given to His own people? In the present, also, why did God expel the Palestinians from their own land so it could to be given to the Israelites?<sup>262</sup> These informants were also refusing the political existence of Israel. In their view, the political existence of Israel was based on injustice and thus gives much legitimacy to using violence to oppress others. It seems that God commanded His people and called them to use violence against others. Israel has no right to exist in our region, these informants added.<sup>263</sup> In this view, the text is a challenge to present day Egyptians by proving the legacy of the modern State of Israel.

The fifth group of informants didn’t give any feedback about verses 9-10. Some of them viewed that the verses 9 and 10 as repetition of verses 7 and 8. To them, the verses 9 and 10 did not add any new information.

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<sup>257</sup> Ibid.

<sup>258</sup> Informant CI 1.1.

<sup>259</sup> Informant CI 1.3.

<sup>260</sup> Informant CI 1.2. Informant CI 1.3.

<sup>261</sup> Informant VI 2.3. Informant VI 2.2.

<sup>262</sup> Informant VI 2.5. Informant VI 2.3. Informant CI 1.4.

<sup>263</sup> Informant VI 2.3. Informant CI 1.4. Informant VI 2.3.

#### 4.4 Analysis and Reflection

From my perspective, the readings of the informants present some challenges and problems. I think that the informants present three dilemmas.

The first dilemma arises because the text presents Egypt and the Egyptians with a negative role. This image has affected the Egyptian understanding of the OT. How can Egyptians understand themselves as Christians who believe in YHWH and His people, while at the same time the OT presents Egypt and Egyptians as a classic enemy of YHWH and His people? In addition, this text creates an unstable and sensitive relationship between the Israelites as the “victim” and Egyptian as the “monster.” We can call this dilemma “the negative role or image of Egypt.”

The second dilemma is that the informants understand the text as mirroring the current persecution of the Egyptian Christians minority by the Muslims majority. The informants see the Egyptian Christians minority as the Hebrew minority, and they see the Muslim majority as the Egyptian majority. We can call this dilemma “the minority reading.”

The third dilemma is the Arab-Israeli political conflict complicates how Arab Christians understand the OT. Some Egyptians see the OT as an exclusively Jewish book or a political Zionist text.<sup>264</sup> Hence, some Egyptian Christians have come to think that if they use the OT, they are supporting the Israeli political project, which include the land of Egypt (Genesis 15:18). We can call this dilemma “the socio-political reading.”

Thus, the informants’ hermeneutics analysis shows us that this text challenge Egyptian Christians in three ways: “the negative role or image of Egypt,” “the minority reading,” and “the socio-political reading.” The main question that that arises is how Egyptian scholars have dealt with these dilemmas. I think that Egyptian scholars have dealt with the three dilemmas via four various approaches: some scholars have ignored the text, some scholars have rejected the text and the OT, some scholars have used allegorical approach, and some scholars have used typological approach.

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<sup>264</sup> Ateek, *Justice, and Only Justice* (1989), 77.

First, some scholars have ignored Exod. 3:7-10, and all the texts that present Egypt negatively and the land problem, because these issues cause embarrassment for Egyptian Christians. Marzouk calls this approach, “a minority report,” which has ignored the text and refused to deal with it. In the Egyptian church today, it is rare to find materials that speak about this text. This omission has created historical, linguistic, theological, and cultural gaps between the present reality and the text. From my perspective, OT scholars ought to formulate Egyptian hermeneutics to reconcile the text with the present context.

Second, some scholars have rejected the text and the OT, and they believe only in the NT.<sup>265</sup> I agree with Marzouk that this approach does not leave any role for the text:

the text as a historical artifact that has nothing to do with our contemporary world. Focusing on the biblical text just as a historical artifact ignores the impact the Bible has had on human history and political relationships between the different communities of faith through history.<sup>266</sup>

For example, Wasym el-Sysy<sup>267</sup> is considered one of the most famous writers on this issue. He has published many articles on the ancient Egyptian civilization and the OT. According to el-Sysy, the Torah is a collection of stories stolen from ancient Egypt. He believes that we must go back to the origin in “the ancient Egyptian civilization.”<sup>268</sup> He explains:

Jews claim that they were slaves in Egypt and we made them taste suffering... the question is, how were they slaves and we gave them our gold and silver?

Jews are thieves: they stole the victories of Thutmose III and attributed them to King David. They stole Akhenaten’s songs and they became the Psalms of David (Breasted). They stole the wisdom of Amenemhat and became Proverbs (Breasted). They stole the Song of Songs from ritual sacred sex from the Sumerians. They stole the flood of Noah from the Epic of Gilgamesh (Wagdy Feshawy). They stole our gold and silver (Torah). They stole our history.<sup>269</sup>

This approach has many strong points. For example, it focuses on Christians who belong to the Arab world. It acknowledges that the Christians do not support Israel. This approach also has many weaknesses. For example, it rejects the OT canon, and separates the OT from the NT. It also has a clear anti Semitic tendency. This approach is not acceptable for most Christians.

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<sup>265</sup> Wasym el-Sysy, “Egypt before my Old Testament,” *the Egyptian Today* (April. 25, 2014), under "setting," URL <http://www.almasyalyoum.com/news/details/611936.html> (Accessed March 3, 2017), 1-2, 1.

<sup>266</sup> Marzouk, *Egypt as a Monster in the Book of Ezekiel* (2015), 11.

<sup>267</sup> Wasym el-Sysy is a University professor in the Faculty of Medicine, the most famous Egyptologists, published many research in the ancient Egyptian civilization and the relationship between the ancient Egyptian civilization and the OT.

<sup>268</sup> Wasym el-Sysy, “Torah and Ridley Scott liar,” *the Egyptian Today* (Dec. 27, 2014), under "setting," URL <http://www.almasyalyoum.com/news/details/611936.html> (Accessed March 3, 2017), 1-2, 1.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid.

Third, some scholars have used an allegorical approach, which is very popular in Egypt, mainly because it had a long history in the first four centuries A.C. in the “the Alexandrian Theological School.”<sup>270</sup> According to Jonker and Lawrie, this approach sees the Bible as “mystery,” and the text was written with symbolic language, idioms, metaphors, and figures. Thus, the function of interpretation is to identify the text’s meaning by perceiving the text’s mystery.<sup>271</sup> This approach is influenced by the philosophy of Plato<sup>272</sup> that dominated the Hellenistic period; including in the Egyptian city of Alexandria was a center of Hellenistic culture. According to Marzouk:

This approach argues that when Christian Egyptians read the Hebrew Bible, they should identify with Israel, which represents the godly, the chosen, the spiritual, and they not identify with the Egypt, which stand in for evil, oppressions, the material, and the rejected.<sup>273</sup>

Thus, this approach presents “Egypt” as a symbol of “evil,” and “the Egyptian” as a symbol of “evil people,” who oppresses others in any place or time. In addition, this approach presents “Israel” as a symbol of the “kingdom of God or the church,” and “the Israelites” as a symbol of “the good” people of God.

On the one hand, there are many strong points in this allegorical approach: it can easily make the text acceptable in the current context because it transfers the text’s symbolic meaning to a contemporary message.<sup>274</sup> Thus, this approach is a way to avoid any dilemmas in the text or the context. For example, this approach avoided the political, theological, historical, social, cultural, and psychological dilemmas between Egypt and Israel.<sup>275</sup> On the other hand, there are many weak points. This approach gives the interpreter or the church a holy authority with temptation to abuse the text, which Jonker and Lawrie called, “the dangers of elitism.”<sup>276</sup> Next, the allegorical approach can easily make “far-fetched speculations.” Because it focuses on the current context of the reader instead of the text, the changes of time, place and culture can

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<sup>270</sup> Jonker and Lawrie, *Fishing for Jonah (Anew): Various Approaches to Biblical Interpretation* (2005), 17.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid, 7-8.

<sup>272</sup> According to this the philosophy, “the world of the senses is merely a dim reflection -a shadow- of another, inadvisable world of ideas which is pure, eternal, perfect, infallible and true. The world of the senses is not the “real” world; it only directs us to the world of ideas.” Jonker and Lawrie, *Fishing for Jonah (Anew): Various Approaches to Biblical Interpretation* (2005), 10.

<sup>273</sup> Marzouk, *Egypt as a Monster in the Book of Ezekiel* (2015), 12.

<sup>274</sup> Jonker and Lawrie, *Fishing for Jonah (Anew): Various Approaches to Biblical Interpretation* (2005), 10.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid.

<sup>276</sup> Ibid.

produce much confusion.<sup>277</sup> This approach increases the conflict of identities in relation to my text. For example, one could ask which identity the Egyptian reader should take on when he/she reads OT texts that speak about Egypt. On the one hand, the Egyptian Christian reader may wear mask of religious identity as a Christian belonging to the history of Israel's faith in order to deal with the texts that portray Egypt negative because it would prevent embarrassment (e.g. Exod. 3:7). On the other hand, an Egyptian Christian reader may wear the mask of political identity as an Egyptian belonging to the history of Egypt when dealing with the texts that portray Egypt positively (e.g. Isa 19:25).<sup>278</sup> I agree with Marzouk that this approach does not focus on text itself, original context, history, literary style, and message; but instead focuses on the spiritual message for our current time. In this way, the allegorical approach would produce historical, theological, linguistic, and cultural gaps between the text and the reader.<sup>279</sup> Ironically, the scholars who use this approach, read the texts that speak positively about Egypt in a literal way (e.g. Isa 19:25).<sup>280</sup> This approach does not resolve the dilemmas of the text, but rather it assert on it, such as the negative image of Egypt.<sup>281</sup>

The fourth approach is typology. The main idea of this approach is that Jesus is the center of the Bible. It is a way to explain how the OT is significant to understanding the NT. The strategy of this approach uses "types" or "anti-types" from the OT and applies them in the NT. In protestant circles in Egypt, this approach is used mainly more in sermons and songs. For example, if we used this approach to explain Exod. 3:7-10, we would see many types in the text such as: "Moses" as a type of "Jesus" (e.g. John 3:14), "Israel" as a type of "church or new Israel" (e.g. Rom. 9:6-29), "Egypt" as a type of "the evil world" (e.g. Rev. 11:8), "Israelites" as a type of "the Christians" (e.g. Gal. 3:26-29), "Egyptians" as a type of "the sons of the world" (e.g. Luke 16:8), "the land" as a type of "the kingdom of God" (e.g. Heb. 11:9-10), and "Pharaoh" as a type of "Satan" (e.g. Eph. 2:2). On the one hand, this approach has much strength, such as the links it makes between the OT with the NT, since it considers that the NT as the fulfillment of the OT. It focuses on the person of Christ and His work. It can be used easily to ignore the socio-political reading of the text. On the other hand, this approach has many weak

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<sup>277</sup> Ibid

<sup>278</sup> Marzouk, *Egypt as a Monster in the Book of Ezekiel* (2015), 12.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid.

points. For example, typology sees only one side of the text's reality which is the understanding of the NT authors and of Christians of the OT texts.<sup>282</sup> Typology ignores another side of the text's reality, which are the OT's original message and the Jewish understanding. For example, Exod. 3:7-10 does not contain any references to Jesus, the world, kingdom of God, or Satan.<sup>283</sup> Thus, as Louis Janker and Douglas Lawrie identify the dangers of typology, this approach might easily misuse the text because it does not deal with the reality of the text itself.<sup>284</sup> Finally, the typological approach does not resolve the textual dilemmas, but rather confirm them. For example, Egypt is a type of the evil world, and the Egyptians are a type of the oppressing people. Hence, this approach also asserts the negative image of Egypt which has become a negative self-image among Egyptian Christians the Egyptian Christians.

In short, my hermeneutical analysis proves that this text challenges Egyptian Christians by presenting them with three dilemmas: "the negative role or image of Egypt," "the minority reading," and "the socio-political reading." Previous hermeneutical approaches have not provided sufficient help to deal with these dilemmas. In the following section, I will discuss the two dilemmas: "the minority reading" and "the socio-political reading" because I dealt with "negative image of Egypt" in the exegetical analysis (3.5.2). I will also present my own applications to the context, which I hope will help the Egyptian reader to deal with these dilemmas.

#### **4.4.1 Minority Reading**

Most Egyptians read my text and the OT as a whole according to the minority reading. This has had a negative effect of the way they understand the text. I believe that Christians in Egypt need "a new exodus," especially after the storm of repercussions that have followed the two revolutions (January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2011 and June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2013), such as the burning and destroying of many churches and Christians' properties (2013), church bombings (2016-2017), and the forced emigration of Christians from Arish in the Sinai (2017).<sup>285</sup> Therefore, I agree with my informant CI 1.3 who draws attention to "the new Egyptian liberation" and how it should be different from

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<sup>282</sup> Jonker and Lawrie, *Fishing for Jonah (Anew): Various Approaches to Biblical Interpretation* (2005), 11.

<sup>283</sup> Ibid.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid.

<sup>285</sup> Alareh city is located on the Mediterranean coast on the Sinai Peninsula.

the old exodus. This exodus should happen “inside” Egypt itself. Egyptian Christians do not seek to get “out” of Egypt, because Egypt is our home, and all Christians have a deep love and sense of belonging to their country.<sup>286</sup> However, there have been many Christian minorities around the world who have suffered, and they managed their suffering through the Liberation Theology. Hence, I believe that those who are suffering in Egypt need an “Egyptian liberation theology.”

The text tells us about YHWH the God of liberation who hears the cries of those who suffer, and who sees spiritual, economic, social, political, and psychological miseries. The text presents YHWH who works in the world and calls all the oppressed people to liberation. This is the same God whom we know through the incarnation (e.g. 1Tim. 3:16). Jesus came to liberate humanity from our various sufferings (e.g. John 8:36; Gal. 5:1), by experiencing the suffering himself (e.g. Heb. 4:15). He calls all people to freedom (e.g. Luke 4:18),<sup>287</sup> and He still calls all people for the liberation (e.g. Mat. 11:28). Thus, He calls all those who are oppressed in Egypt to liberation. This Egyptian liberation theology ought to be built on many pillars such as reality, love, forgiveness, trust, reconciliation, justice, and dialogue. All of these pillars are important, but it is not possible to make a full discussion about every pillar within the scope of this limited thesis. Therefore, I will present six pillars as examples.

#### 4.4.1.1 Reality

Before the author of Exodus presents the liberation motif in chapter three, he describes the reality of the Hebrews in chapters one and two. Similarly, Egyptian liberation theology might start with “The reality on the ground.”<sup>288</sup> The leaders of the churches might study, analyze, and reflect on the situation of the Egyptian Christians, and ask themselves what the meaning of liberation for the Christian minority in Egypt might be. How should this theology expressed in Egyptian culture and identity? What are the core values? What are the vision, the mission, and the tools of this theology? What are the challenges and the opportunities? How does this theology express all the aspects of life that need liberation?

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<sup>286</sup> Informants, CI 1.3.

<sup>287</sup> Raheb, *I Am a Palestinian Christian* (1995), 89.

<sup>288</sup> Kairos Document, A moment of truth: A word of faith, hope and love from the heart of Palestinian suffering. <http://www.kairospalestine.ps/index.php/about-us/kairos-palestine-document> (Accessed: January 30, 2017).



#### 4.4.1.2 Call for Justice

In Exod. 3:7-10, the oppressed Israelite minority were crying out to YHWH to get justice. For a long time, Christians in Egypt have suffered under persecution, but they did not cry out for liberation. The church leaders have tended to face persecution in two ways, “silence” and/or “isolation,” as spiritual ways. Pope Shenouda III (1923-2012) made use of these ways, since the incidents of persecution in 1982. Since the 1980s, the Islamic majority has caused tension, conflict, and dramatic violence against the Christian minority.<sup>289</sup> In every storm of persecution, Shenouda was silent, and isolated himself in a monastery. He supported his action with some verses (e.g. Exod. 14: 14; Psa. 39:9 Rom. 12:19). Shenouda’s strategy became a basic strategy for the whole Egyptian church. In addition, church leaders linked the “silence with tolerance” and “isolation with piety.” Yacoub explains how the church leaders support the first way:

Church leaders have used some way of preaching convincing their congregation that Suffering and persecution intended for testing their faith. God allows those difficulties to affect them as blessings that strengthen Christians and Christianity. Therefore, Christians should accept them without complains. Complaining or expressing anger indicates weakness of faith.<sup>290</sup>

Church leaders support the way of isolation by saying that Christians do not belong to the physical world, but to another world the spiritual one. Thus, many teachings and songs have convinced Christians that they ought not to care about what happens around them in this world, but only be concerned about the heavenly world.<sup>291</sup> I agree with Yacoub that silence and the isolation are not spiritual ways, and that they have produced negative results. Silence lets Muslims think that Christians are weak, without any determination to defend their rights.<sup>292</sup> Isolation produces a big social and cultural gap between the Christians and Egyptian society, and creates new societies for Christians as ghettos. I believe, however, that the Christians have to call for justice. They should demand their rights as citizens. The Christians should believe that Jesus was not silent, isolated, weak, or afraid; but instead He was strong and brave. He spoke out and revolted. As Khalil Gibran<sup>293</sup> says in his poem “the crucified”:

The Nazarene was not weak! He was strong and is strong! But the people refuse to heed the true meaning of strength.

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<sup>289</sup> Yacoub, *Conflicts Between Christian and Muslims in Egypt since 1980* (2011), 5-9, 12.

<sup>290</sup> Ibid, 73.

<sup>291</sup> Ibid, 73-74.

<sup>292</sup> Ibid, 74.

<sup>293</sup> kahlil Gibran (1883 –1931) was a Lebanese-American poet and writer.

Jesus never lived a life of fear, nor did He die suffering or complaining.... He lived as a leader; He was crucified as a crusader; He died with a heroism that frightened His killers and tormentors. Jesus was not a bird with broken wings; He was a raging tempest who broke all crooked wings. He feared not His persecutors nor His enemies. He suffered not before His killers. Free and brave and daring He was. He defied all despots and oppressors.<sup>294</sup>

#### 4.4.1.3 Dialogue

In (Exod. 3-11), I observe that YHWH made dialogues on two levels. First, YHWH held a dialogue with the oppressed people through Moses. Second, YHWH held a dialogue with the oppressing people through Pharaoh. I agree with Ataulah Siddiqui and Kate Zebiri that dialogue does not mean to “chat” with each other. Rather it is to converse to “know” each other.<sup>295</sup> I believe that we need a real dialogue in the Egyptian context on three levels.

The First level of dialogue should be, Christian to Christian, Christians should recognize that they are under persecution, but instead they ignore the problem by silence and isolation. They should work together to build a liberation theology for their situation.

The second level should be, Christian to Muslim dialogue. The conflicts between Muslims and Christians have created many different gaps between them. Thus, they should take action to know each other, to cross the gaps, to respect and trust each other, and to work together in promoting peace and facing extremism.<sup>296</sup>

The third level of dialogue should be, Christian to state, Christians should stop thinking like a minority, and think of themselves as citizens in the state, and in that role they should demand their rights from the state.

I think that there are many challenges to such dialogue, such as the history of mistrust and the fundamentalist groups. But, I also believe that there are many opportunities such as common ground, the Egyptian culture of hospitality, and the civil organizations that sponsor dialogue.<sup>297</sup>

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<sup>294</sup> Kahlil Gibran, “The crucified: Written in Good Friday,” *Third Treasury of Kahlil Gibran* (New York: Philosophical Library/Open Road, 2011), 129.

<sup>295</sup> Ataulah Siddiqui, *Christian-Muslim Dialogue in the Twentieth Century* (Basingstoke : Macmillan [u.a.], 1997), 125. Cited in: Yacoub, *Conflicts Between Christian and Muslims in Egypt since 1980* (2011), 83.

<sup>296</sup> For more information: *Fostering Social Resilience against Extremism: Leader for Interreligious Understanding & Counter Extremism Toolkit*, Fadi Daou (ed.), (Copenhagen: LIU program, 2015), 1-39.

<sup>297</sup> Yacoub, *Conflicts Between Christian and Muslims in Egypt since 1980* (2011), 83-87.

#### 4.4.1.4 Reconciliation

I believe that when God first sent Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh, it was a call for reconciliation because they asked the Pharaoh only to let the Hebrews go and celebrate a festival in the wilderness (e.g. Exod. 5:1). Pharaoh rejected this call, and he oppressed the Hebrews more (e.g. Exod. 5:1-22). However, the concept of reconciliation is not only a central concept in the Bible, but is also a central concept in the Christian theology.<sup>298</sup> The OT uses only the passive form of the verb  $\text{הִשְׁלַח}$  (1Sam. 29:4), which the LXX translated “διαλλάσσω/reconcile.”<sup>299</sup> The term “reconcile” derived from the Greek “καταλλάσσω” which was used 6 times in the Pauline epistles.<sup>300</sup> Paul used the term with a new meaning, new usage, and a new active form. Howard Marshall explains that Paul used “the active form of the verb to describe how God initiates friendly relations between Himself and man by putting away the sin which aroused his own anger against them.”<sup>301</sup> Thus, Paul gives reconciliation a new meaning that God is the subject who puts our sins on His son to save us from the wrath of God. God takes the initiative to make friendly relations between himself and human beings. God and humans are not equal, but reconciliation depends on the grace of God.<sup>302</sup> Thus, there are three roles in reconciliation. The first is, the role of God who loves us, and He sent His son to save us. The second is, the role of Christ who takes our sins away and gives us God’s righteousness through His death. Thus, God reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and He removed His own anger against us. The third is, the role of men who accept God’s act in Christ, and who should serve God through the ministry of the reconciliation (2 Cor. 5: 20; Rom. 5: 10).<sup>303</sup> Thus, the Christians who live in Egypt have a role which is to fulfill their ministry of reconciliation for those who oppress them. We should take the initiative and become ambassadors of reconciliation to take away the deeds of the people who are oppressing us, and remove our own anger against them.<sup>304</sup> Christians should not only be

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<sup>298</sup> Howard Marshall, “The Meaning of Reconciliation,” Robert A. Guelich (ed.), *Unity and Diversity in New Testament Theology Essays in Honor of George E. Ladd* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1978), 117.

<sup>299</sup> Jostein Ådna, “Lecture on 2 Corinthians 5:11–21,” *Pauline Letters and New Testament Theology* (Stavanger: VID Specialized University, Campus Stavanger Spring term, 2016), 1-8, 4. Lee Brenton, *The Septuagint Version* (1970), 397.

<sup>300</sup> H. Merkel, “καταλλαγή,” *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* 2 (1990), 261-263, 261.

<sup>301</sup> Marshall, “The Meaning of Reconciliation,” (1978), 127.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid, 128.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid, 125-128. Ådna, “Lecture on 2 Corinthians 5:11–21,” (2016), 6-8.

<sup>304</sup> Ibid, 125-128.

peacemakers, but they should also train leaders from all religions and groups in order to empower them to make peace too.<sup>305</sup>

#### 4.4.1.5 Inclusiveness

Liberation in Exodus was a comprehensive act (Exod. 3:15).<sup>306</sup> Politically, the Israelites were refugees and an ethnic minority, but God liberated them and they became a nation. Spiritually, Israel not know who is YHWH (c.f. Exod. 3: 13-14), and Israel may have been affected by polytheistic environment of Egypt (c.f. Exod. 12:12).<sup>307</sup> Thus, the exodus also had a spiritual dimension as Wright explains that: “the spiritual dimension of the exodus, then, is that God makes it clear that his purpose in the whole process is that it should lead to *knowledge, service, and worship* of the living God.”<sup>308</sup> Socially, the Exodus presents the Hebrews as a minority without rights (Exod. 1:8-22), but after their liberation they became a society that has a leader, law, justice, and a social system. Economically, the Israelites were slaves under the hard labor (e.g. Exod. 1:11-14), but God gave the Israelites grace in the eyes of the Egyptians, who gave them articles of silver, articles of gold, and clothing (Exod. 12:35-36). In addition, God gave them a land.<sup>309</sup> Thus, I agree with Wright that “in the exodus God respond to all the dimensions of Israel’s need.”<sup>310</sup> God has redeemed His people economically, socially, spiritually, and politically for a purpose, and this purpose is that His people redeem, in turn, others who are oppressed. Thus, God liberated His people who are in the church for a purpose and this purpose is that His people would in turn liberate those who are oppressed in various ways.<sup>311</sup> In addition, liberation includes all those oppressed from the Israelites and among the Egyptians as well (Exod. 12:38; Num. 11:4; Neh. 13:3). Thus, an Egyptian liberation theology should be for all those who suffer in Egypt: human and animal, Christians and Muslims, religious or secular, men and women, and young and old.

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<sup>305</sup> *Preventing Violent Extremism Through interfaith Dialogue* (Copenhagen: Danmission Briefing Paper November, 2016), 1-4, 2.

<sup>306</sup> Christopher Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 265.

<sup>307</sup> *Ibid*, 268-271.

<sup>308</sup> *Ibid*, 271.

<sup>309</sup> *Ibid*, 268-269.

<sup>310</sup> *Ibid*, 271.

<sup>311</sup> *Ibid*, 97-101.

#### 4.4.1.6 Continuity

Exod. 3:7 explains that the plan of God for His oppressed people begins with liberation, and the OT books show that liberation continues through the whole of OT history in all aspects of the Hebrews' life. Thus, we should also continue the liberating experience in all the aspects of our Egyptian lives. The question can come up here: how can we keep this experience? I believe that the church should preserve this experience in its daily life. In fact, there are many fields for which the church should shape a special liberation theology. For example, the church should create liberation theologies for women, kids, those with disabilities, workers, the marginalized, the poor, homeless children, and many others. In fact, the Egyptian church has a long way to go to produce many kinds of liberation theology that cover all these elements of the Egyptian community.

#### 4.4.2 Socio-Political Reading

Our look at the third dilemma showed us how many Egyptian Christians mix the present political and social situation with religion with regard to the Arab-Israel political conflict on the land and its implication. The socio-political reading causes many theological, moral, exegetical, social, political, and psychological implications that confuse the reader.

Theologically, the socio-political reading of the text generates many theological implications. I may be able to collect these implications into two points. The first one is about the image of God. The informants observed two contradictory images about God.<sup>312</sup> On the one hand, the text portrays YHWH as the God of mercy who hears the cries and knows the sufferings of his people.<sup>313</sup> On the other hand, the text also draws a negative image of YHWH as God of violence, injustice, war, and discrimination.<sup>314</sup> The second point has to do with theological debates among Egyptian Christians about the relationship between the OT and the modern State of Israel. On the one hand, some follow the Christian Zionist movement,<sup>315</sup> and they come to

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312 Informant CI 1.5.

313 Informant VI 2.5. Informant CI 1.5. Informant CI 1.4.

314 Informant VI 2.5. Informant VI 2.1. Informant CI 1.2. Informant CI 1.5. Informant CI 1.4. Informant VI 2.4. Informant VI 2.3. Informant VI 2.2.

<sup>315</sup> According to Colin Chapman, "Christian Zionism can be defined as 'Christian support for Zionism that is based on theological reasons'. Christian Zionism believe that the establishment of Jewish state is a very significant part of God's plan both for the Jewish people and for the world, and that for this reason they should

think that if they support the existence of Israel, they support God's plan for salvation. On the other hand, others believe that there is no connection between the OT and the modern State of Israel. Thus, Egyptian readers become confused by these debates of two groups.

Morally, the informants indicated many critical ideas about YHWH linked with their situation in Egypt and in the Middle East. For example, God promised to help His people to take land that belonged to others. The informants ask: Why did God ask His people to expel the dwellers through violence? Where did God's justice go? In addition, the informants saw the conquest motif in the text as being against human rights, peace, justice, and equity.<sup>316</sup>

Exegetically, the socio-political reading reflects that there is a challenge. I agree with Walter Brueggemann who argues that issue of the land is a challenge in the context of biblical faith,<sup>317</sup> and I would like to add that the land is a challenge in biblical exegesis also. For example, how can one interpret the biblical verses about the land of Israel that cause confusion for the reader of the OT, especially for Arab Christians? On the ground of this problem, regarding the land, Egyptian readers have for the most part, avoided reading the OT for more than a half-century because there are no studies and interpretations about the texts that help her/him deal with this issue. In addition, the omission of study of these texts has caused theological, historical, linguistic, and cultural gaps between the reader and the OT.

Socially, I agree with CI 1.5 who claims that Exod. 3:7-10 has produced a sensitive relationship between Jews and Egyptians<sup>318</sup> and between Jews and the others in the past and in the present. In the past, the text produced a sensitive relationship between Jews who felt self-pity as victims and Egyptians who felt guilty as monsters. The issue of the land has caused major hostility between the Israelites and the original dwellers of the six nations. In the present, the relationship between Jews and Egyptians continues to be sensitive. In addition, the Arab-Israeli conflict has caused great deal of hostility between Jews and Arabs. I agree with Isaac and Ateek, who argue that the land has not only caused a sensitive relationship between Jews and Muslims, but also between Muslims and Christians.<sup>319</sup> Muslims have come to think that if the Christians

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support the state of Israel." Colin Chapman, *Whose Promised Land? The Continuing Crisis Over Israel and Palestine* (Oxford: Lion Publishing, 2002), 274- 275.

<sup>316</sup> Informant VI 2.5. Informant VI 2.2. Informant VI 2.1. Informant CI 1.2. Informant CI 1.5. Informant CI 1.4. Informant VI 2.4. Informant VI 2.3.

<sup>317</sup> Brueggemann, *The Land: Place As Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith* (1997), cover page.

<sup>318</sup> Informant CI 1.5.

<sup>319</sup> Isaac, *From Land to Lands, From Eden to the Renewed Earth* (2014), 373-381. Ateek, *Justice, and Only Justice* (1989), 6.

use the OT, they support the Israeli political project, and that therefore the Christians are our enemy. Isaac draws especial attention at this point, and he argues that “the land today is a place of hostility, strife, and division.”<sup>320</sup>

Politically, on the ground of the land, many wars have broken out between the time of Israel’s conquest of the land until now in the Israel-Palestine conflict. In current time, I agree with Ateek who argues that many political abuses have affected the Arab understanding of the OT.<sup>321</sup> I agree also with John Collins about the conquest of the land have been used by different people in different times and places to justify conquering other lands and killing their aborigines, such as the Native American tribes and the tribes in South Africa.<sup>322</sup>

Psychologically, Egyptian Christians have been suffering with guilt because of what their ancestors did with the Hebrews. This image has created a self-image inside Egyptians that they are bad people and against God and His people. With regard to the land dilemma, many abuses have been committed in the conflicts over the Promised Land, as John Collins argues.<sup>323</sup>

In short, the previous analyses illustrated that the Egyptian reader misunderstands the text because she/he reads the text through the lens of the socio-political reading that was generated by the Arab-Israel conflict about the land and its implications. From my experience as an OT scholar at ETSC, I think that the socio-political reading consists of three linked themes: “Israel as a chosen people,” “the Promised Land,” and “the gap between the NT and the OT.” I believe that we should address with these three themes in order to solve the problems with the socio-political reading. I believe that there are three themes can help us: “the universality of YHWH,” “the theology of the land,” and “the connection of the OT with the NT.”

#### **4.4.2.1 Universality of YHWH**

According to some Egyptian Christians, the real problem is that YHWH is “the God of Israel.” They think that God has chosen Israel, and has therefore rejected the nations. My hermeneutical analysis showed that many informants criticized YHWH on this ground. We might overcome this dilemma through focusing on the universality of YHWH in the OT. The Egyptian church

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<sup>320</sup> Isaac, *From Land to Lands, From Eden to the Renewed Earth* (2014), 379.

<sup>321</sup> Ibid.

<sup>322</sup> Collins, *Does the Bible Justify Violence* (2004), 19-20.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid, 2, 17-20.

must explain that YHWH not only is the God of Israel, but is also the universal God as Wright argues:

Wherever you look in the canon of the Old Testament, there are texts to be found that declare that YHWH, the Lord God of Israel, is the one and only universal God of all the earth or of all the nations or of all humanity. YHWH made all, owns all, and rules all...The uniqueness and universality of YHWH are foundational axioms of Old Testament faith, which in turn are foundational to New Testament Christian faith, worship, and mission.<sup>324</sup>

YHWH is the Lord of the earth and all that is in it (Psa. 24:1). Thus, YHWH is the God of the nations and Israel (e.g. Gen. 9:17; Exod. 9: 14-16; Psa. 45:17). Wright, in his book *The Mission of God*, brings to light by two points that the nations were the center of God's covenant. First, he used Paul's argument in Galatians about the Abrahamic covenant (Gal. 3:6-9) to prove that God chose Israel to bless the nations, and that therefore the nations were the center of God's blessings for Israel.<sup>325</sup> Second, Wright asserts that God has given Israel the responsibility to bless the nations, and it was for this responsibility that God gave a special blessing to Israel.<sup>326</sup> Thus, the nations are the heart and the center of the blessing of Israel as Wright explains:

Clearly, therefore, [the blessing of the Nations] is not just an afterthought tacked on to the end of God's promise to Abraham but a key element of it. Blessing for the nations is the bottom line, textually and theologically, of God's promise to Abraham.<sup>327</sup>

#### 4.4.2.2 Theology of the Land

The Egyptian Christians find the issue of the Promised Land to be one of the most difficult issues that is facing them every day. In the language of the OT, the land is usually "the land of Israel." On the other hand, there are historical rights belonging to the Palestinian people, and Egyptian Christians see our brothers and sisters being killed because of the land. After that, how can Egyptian Christians read the OT? I propose that there are several points in the theology of the land that the church could explain in order to deal with this problem of the land. For example, the land played a significant role in the witness to God's salvation history in the OT because it tells a story of God and His people. Many scholars make this argument, such as Isaac, who calls the land "the fifth Gospel" or "the living stones."<sup>328</sup> I believe that we should not mix up politics with

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<sup>324</sup> Christopher Wright, *The Mission of God* (2006), 71.

<sup>325</sup> *Ibid*, 179-200.

<sup>326</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>327</sup> *Ibid*, 189.

<sup>328</sup> Isaac, *From Land to Lands, From Eden to the Renewed Earth* (2014), 378-379.



the OT. I agree with Wright that many abuses have been committed by mixing the political conflict with the OT:

In my view, great damage is done by those who confuse and conflate the Old Testament Israelites in the canon of the Bible with the contemporary diaspora of ethnic Jews around the world, Judaism as a religion, and the modern political state of Israel- as if they were all the same thing.... Especially we need to distinguish what we believe the New Testament says about the Jews as the ethnic descendants of Abraham from the claims and actions of the modern state of Israel.<sup>329</sup>

Christians ought to understand that this land is the land of YHWH as a “divine ownership” who gave it to Israel as a “divine gift” within the covenant blessings.<sup>330</sup> Fourth, YHWH attached responsibilities and rights for the Promised Land under the blessings of the covenant, but Israel broke the covenant. Thus, Israel lost the blessings that include the gift of the land.<sup>331</sup> In other words, the land was to function as a “measuring gauge” or “thermometer” of the covenantal relationship.<sup>332</sup> The land was not for Israel only, but was also for all those who were under the covenant, such as the aliens (Ezek. 47:21-23).<sup>333</sup> According to the NT, we believe that: Jesus is the perfect fulfillment of the OT; the land was extended and universalized to cover the whole earth (Matt. 28:18:20); the new Israel is all those who believe in Jesus (e.g. Rom. 9:6-29; Gal. 3: 26-29); and all those who belong to Christ are Abraham’s offspring and heirs of the land (e.g. Gal. 3: 16, 29).<sup>334</sup> Thus, I agree with Wright that in the NT, “our faith has its center in a person who is Christ, not a central place; that is, Jesus is the center, not the land.”<sup>335</sup> In addition, we believe in the importance of persons not in the importance of the land as Isaac argues:

Christians must remember that the people of the land are as important as the land itself when it comes to narrating the biblical story and the story of the land over the centuries. Christian who visits the land must have a connection not just with the old stones of the old churches, but more importantly, the “living stones” of the land- the community of faith where God in reality dwells.<sup>336</sup>

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<sup>329</sup> Christopher Wright, *Salvation Belongs to Our God: Celebrating the Bible's Central Story* (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Academic, 2007), 13.

<sup>330</sup> Christopher Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (Downers Grove, Ill: Inter-Varsity Press, 2004), 77, 85.

<sup>331</sup> Ibid, 88- 95.

<sup>332</sup> Ibid, 96.

<sup>333</sup> Kās̄ys, *Why Do not We Read the Book That Christ Read It?* (2010), 122.

<sup>334</sup> Isaac, *From Land to Lands, From Eden to the Renewed Earth* (2014), 377-378. Kās̄ys, *Why Do not We Read the Book That Christ Read It?* (2010), 124-127.

<sup>335</sup> Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (2004), 76.

<sup>336</sup> Isaac, *From Land to Lands, From Eden to the Renewed Earth* (2014), 379.

The theme of the land in the OT and the NT can be used as a foundation on which to build many theological themes in the Egyptian context such as Ecotheology.<sup>337</sup> Finally, the Egyptian Christians must learn from the Palestinian Christians' experience of the land. The Palestinian Christians gave a good example as peace-makers, meek, and promoting co-existence<sup>338</sup> through doing, "the Palestinian Christians Liberation Theology." For example, the Palestinian Christians formulated "the Kairos Palestine Documents"<sup>339</sup> that concludes their faith about the land:

We, a group of Christian Palestinians, after prayer, reflection ... we proclaim our word based on our Christian faith and our sense of Palestinian belonging – a word of faith, hope and love. We believe that our land has a universal mission. In this universality, the meaning of the promises, of the land, of the election, of the people of God open up to include all of humanity, starting from all the peoples of this land. In light of the teachings of the Holy Bible, the promise of the land has never been a political programme, but rather the prelude to complete universal salvation. It was the initiation of the fulfilment of the Kingdom of God on earth.<sup>340</sup>

#### 4.4.3.3 Connection between the OT and the NT

The socio-political reading makes a distinction between the OT and the NT. This reading recognizes the OT as the book of Israel and the NT as the book of the Church. Or, the OT is as the book of the old covenant (law) and the NT as the book of the new covenant (grace). Instead of that approach, scholars and leaders of the church might focus on the connection between the OT and the NT as one book, one covenant, and one story. There are many ways to achieve this connection. Examples include the theme of the promise in the OT fulfillment in the NT such as the promise of the Messiah, concepts that are central in both testaments such as the covenant, the central characters such as Jesus,<sup>341</sup> the central themes such as salvation, and the central biblical doctrines such as the Trinity.<sup>342</sup>

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<sup>337</sup> Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (2004), 71- 119.

<sup>338</sup> Ibid, 382.

<sup>339</sup> Kairos Document is a theological document by the Palestinian theologians, which published in 2009. In addition, it became a Christian Palestinian movement, "which advocates for ending the Israeli occupation and achieving a just solution to the conflict." <http://www.kairos-palestine.ps/> (Accessed: January 30, 2017).

<sup>340</sup> Kairos Document, A moment of truth: A word of faith, hope and love from the heart of Palestinian suffering. <http://www.kairos-palestine.ps/index.php/about-us/kairos-palestine-document> (Accessed: January 30, 2017).

<sup>341</sup> Kāsays, *Why Do not We Read the Book That Christ Read It?* (2010), 145-160.

<sup>342</sup> Wright used the Trinity to make a main link between the OT and the NT by three books: Christopher Wright, *Knowing God the Father through the Old Testament* (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Academic, 2007). Christopher Wright, *Knowing Jesus through the Old Testament* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1992). Christopher Wright, *Knowing Holy Spirit through the Old Testament* (Downers, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2006).

## 4.5 Conclusion

Most of my informants were confused about the text at many levels. It is clear that the verses are a challenge to the reader in the Egyptian context. How do these verses challenge the Egyptian reader? According to my analysis and reflection, the informants were shy, embarrassed, and confused because of the negative image of Egypt. They were confused because they are oppressed minority who has expected that God would liberate them from persecution by the majority. The text confused the informants socially and politically because they were linking the text with the Arab-Israeli conflict about the land, and they were reading the text from a socio-political approach. The informants highlighted many implications of a socio-political reading. Socially, this reading has created a sensitive relationship between Christians, Jews, and Muslims. In addition, this reading has asserted the claim that the OT is used as a political Zionist book in the Jewish circle and among some conservative Christians in the US.

The Egyptian Christian reader uses many approaches that do not resolve the dilemmas of the text, but rather than they confirm these dilemmas. For example, some approaches which the reader used to deal with the negative role or image of Egypt instead asserted this image even more. Thus it shaped the self-image of the Egyptian Christians. I have presented my own applications to the Egyptian context, which I hope will help the reader to deal with these hermeneutical dilemmas.

## Chapter Five

### CONCLUSION

How can Exodus 3: 7-10 be read from the conscious Egyptian perspective, exegetically with regard to the role of Egypt in this text and in the OT, and hermeneutically with regard to the role of the text for contemporary Egyptian readers? The exegetical and hermeneutical analyses explain that it is complex and difficult to read the text from the conscious Egyptian perspective. The Egyptian reader uses many approaches which do not resolve the dilemmas of the text, but rather confirm these dilemmas.

The exegetical analysis shows us that the role of Egypt in this text seems to be negative. In fact, the land of hope and refuge in the patriarchal narrative becomes a land of slavery in the exodus narrative.<sup>343</sup> This role dominated in the OT for number reasons. First, the text was used by the OT's authors as a key text about God's salvation plan for His chosen people. Hence, as the text became a basis for the liberation motifs in the OT, the negative role or image of Egypt traditionally became also a basic picture of the slave land or oppressor. Second, a majority of OT scholars have followed traditionally the previous attitude of the OT authors of this text. Thus, they have been convinced that Egypt had a negative role in the OT, and this conviction has dominated their studies. Third, for the reasons which I criticized previously, known OT scholars neglected to study Egypt as a specific subject in the OT. This neglect has resulted in support of this negative perception of Egypt's role. I have argued, however, that the Israelites were not oppressed for most of their time in Egypt, but that the Israelites received and cared for as were refugees. It was not until later that Israel suffered under the Egyptian oppression for political-historical reasons (Exod. 1:8-10). Hence, we should distinguish between the attitude of the Egyptians who were generous, and the attitude of the political system which became negative later on for political-historical reasons. Thus, it is not fair to say only that Egypt was the land of slavery. It makes better sense to see that Egypt as a land of refuge that later made political mistakes. This kind of the deeper reading of the OT reveals another positive role that Egypt played. As, I explained, there is a tension between the negative image and the positive image of Egypt in the OT, both of which were generated from political-historical reasons. When we

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<sup>343</sup> Habtu, "The Images of Egypt in the Old Testament," (2001), 60.

reconcile the two images, we can see: “the slave house became a welcome asylum.”<sup>344</sup> In addition, the OT attests a similar tension between Israel and all the nations.

My hermeneutical analysis shows us that although this text play a major role for contemporary Egyptian readers, the readers misuse or misunderstand the text in three ways: a reading that highlights a negative image of Egypt, a socio-political reading, and an oppressed minority reading. These three approaches reveal the three dilemmas that challenge the Egyptian readers, and influence their understanding of the text, the OT, and their own identity. By examining the three dilemmas, we can observe that the real problem is that the informants read the passage out of context. In most cases, the informants read the text outside of its own original context by neglecting the original context. She/he read the text instead from her/his own context that is a hybrid of various political, social, economic, theological, cultural, and psychological aspects.<sup>345</sup> Thus, the problems arise because it is the context, not of the text itself, but of the reader that has shaped how the readers have approached the text. Actually, as Raheb argues, this is the case for all the Arab Christians in the Middle East who have found themselves among social, political, economic, theological, and psychological problems that arise from their context.<sup>346</sup>

I believe, however, that the Egyptian reader is both a part of the problem and a part of the solution. On the one hand, the Egyptian reader is a part of the problem for two reasons. He/she reads the text from the hybrid context of Egypt, and he/she does not focus on the text itself in its own historical, literal, and theological context. Second, the Egyptian reader uses a number of approaches to reading the text, such as the allegorical and typological approaches that do not resolve the dilemmas of the text, but they confirm these dilemmas. On the other hand, the Egyptian reader is a part of the solution by drawing his/her initial understanding from the text itself and then building a bridge from the text to his/her own context and vice versa. In other words, the reader may develop dynamic and valuable conversations between various contexts: the text and its world with the reader’s context and world; the author and his world with the reader and her/his world; and ultimately between the author, the text, the context, and the reader, all together. Next, the reader ought to understand that the text: 1) as a historical text, has its

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<sup>344</sup> Mordechi Cogan, “The other Egypt: A Welcom Asylum,” Michael V. Fox et al. (ed.), *Texts Temples and Tradition: A Tribut to Menahem Haran* (Winona Lake, Ind: Eisenbraun, 1996), 65-70, 70.

<sup>345</sup> Marzouk, *Egypt as a Monster in the Book of Ezekiel* (2015), 13.

<sup>346</sup> Raheb, *I Am a Palestinian Christian* (1995), 3-46.

sources; 2) as a theological text, has its message; 3) as a literary text, has its own style and language. In addition, he/she might be aware of the different historical, cultural, theological, political, literary, social, and psychological interactions between the text and the context. Lastly, the reader would do well to apply a number of approaches or modes to study the text from different aspects that are appropriate to his/her context, such as the three modes: “behind the text,” “in the text,” and “in front the text.”

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**Interviewees:**

<b>Grpups</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>City/Village</b>
<b>1- City Group (CI 1)</b>	Ramses Toab	CI 1.1	June 9, 2016	Damya
	Ragay Mohy	CI 1.2	June 11, 2016	El-Minia
	Akram Atta	CI 1.3	June 15, 2016	Cairo
	Amer shehat	CI 1.4	June 17, 2016	Cairo
	Micheal Shehata	CI 1.5	June 25, 2016	Sohag
<b>2-Village Group (VI 2)</b>	Sameh Anor	VI 2.1	July 15, 2016	el-Kom el-Akhder
	Throu Moisa	VI 2.2	June 21, 2016	Azbat Ayoub
	Peter Nady	VI 2.3	June 20, 2016	Dakouf
	Adel Hnin	VI 2.4	July 4, 2016	Akaka
	Samer Shokry	VI 2.5	July 14, 2016	Taht el-Drat