

Reverberations of Faith

Walter Brueggemann, *Reverberations of Faith* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002),

Egypt

In the Joseph narrative (Gen. 37-50), Egypt is the breadbasket of that part of the world to which others came in the midst of famine (See Gen. 12:10-20). As a land of abundance, Egypt was already portrayed in Gen. 47:13-26 as a monopolizing power that deprived peasants of their land and livelihood.

Walter Brueggemann, *Reverberations of Faith* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 59.

In the Exodus narrative, Egypt is portrayed as a place of bondage from which Yahweh has emancipated Israel. Egyptian power is portrayed as completely antagonistic to the will of Yahweh.

Walter Brueggemann, *Reverberations of Faith* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 60.

In the narrative of Solomon (1 Kings 23-11), the text connects Solomon to Pharaoh by way of marriage (1 Kings 3:1; 7:8; 9:24; 11:1). These references indicate an important political alliance between Solomon and Egypt. Solomon began to govern like Pharaoh in ruthless, exploitative ways.

Walter Brueggemann, *Reverberations of Faith* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 60.

Babylon

Babylon was an ancient and formidable culture (located in what is now Iraq) that periodically dominated the politics and trade of the Near East. Its culture was immensely advanced in science and learning. Nebuchadnezzar had territorial ambitions to the west and south and invaded Judah several times and finally in 587 ended Judah and enacted a third deportation of Israelites to Babylon (Jer. 52:28-30). The Deuteronomic prophetic traditions understood the disaster as deserved punishment from YHWH, Nebuchadnezzar acted behest of YHWH. In that light, Nebuchadnezzar is an incidental figure in Yahweh's administration. For that reason in Jer. 25:9 and 27:6, YHWH calls Nebuchadnezzar "my servant"; and in Is. 47:6, the assertion appears that Yahweh, in anger, made "my people" available for the brutality of Nebuchadnezzar.

Walter Brueggemann, *Reverberations of Faith* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 17.

But a second interpretive claim is that Nebuchadnezzar went beyond the mandate of YHWH and showed no mercy toward Jerusalem (Is. 47:6-7), not only violent toward Israel but violently opposed to YHWH, who will eventually judge and terminate Babylon. Thus the book of Jeremiah, in which Nebuchadnezzar is regarded as "my servant," reverses direction and ends with an assault on the arrogance of Babylon who dared to act against YHWH's people (Jer. 50-51) and with an anticipatory narrative concerning the soon-to-come fall of Babylon (Jer. 51:64; see Is. 13-14)... Nebuchadnezzar – Babylon become a metaphor for arrogant, autonomous power that does evil in the world in opposition to YHWH's will. Gen. 11:1-9 reflects the arrogance of Babylonian self-sufficiency. In Dan. 4, Nebuchadnezzar is portrayed as an autonomous power who is driven insane and restored to sanity and power only when he submits to the ultimate rule

of Yahweh (Dan. 4:34-37). Martin Luther famously critiqued the Roman Church with his phrase, “The Babylonian Captivity of the Church.” In recent time, Weaton and Shank (1988) have used the same imagery to portray the “global” reach of the United States into Central America as a Babylonian force.

Walter Brueggemann, *Reverberations of Faith* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 18.