

Dr. N. Mtshiselwa
Department of Biblical
and Ancient Studies,
University of
South Africa.
mtshivnn@unisa.ac.za

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/actat.v36i1.9S>

ISSN 1015-8758 (Print)
ISSN 2309-9089 (Online)

Acta Theologica 2016
Suppl 24:131-156

© UV/UFS



READING ISAIAH 58 IN CONVERSATION WITH I.J. MOSALA: AN AFRICAN LIBERATIONIST APPROACH¹

ABSTRACT

This paper sets out to draw on, and simultaneously depart from Mosala's Black biblical hermeneutic of liberation in order to navigate liberating possibilities that Isaiah 58 could offer to the oppressed Black people in Southern Africa. First, the paper explores Mosala's trajectory in biblical hermeneutics. Secondly, from both the liberative and the African philosophical – African liberationist – points of view, Isaiah 58 is re-read in light of the Southern African context. Finally, the author submits that, if read from an African liberationist perspective, the text of Isaiah 58 could contribute positively to socio-economic redress, particularly to poverty alleviation and, subsequently, to rebuilding relationships in Southern Africa.

1. INTRODUCTION

The interest of this study lies in reading the Christian Bible from a perspective that stands in continuity with Mosala's Black biblical hermeneutic of liberation. Mosala (1989:40) is well known for his famous remark:

1 This article is in honour of the contributions of Rev. Dr Itumeleng J. Mosala to Old Testament scholarship in Africa and to the growth of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa. In addition, this article is based on my PhD thesis titled, "Re-reading the Israelite Jubilee in Leviticus 25:8-55 in the context of land redistribution and socio-economic justice in South Africa: An African liberationist perspective".

Biblical texts are products, records, and sites of social, historical, cultural, gender, racial and ideological struggles, and radically and indelibly bear the marks of their origins and history. The biblical text is not an innocent and transparent container of a message or messages.

Given the normative status enjoyed by the Bible in South Africa at present, the implication of the preceding remark is that the possible oppressive elements contained in the Old Testament and their relevance to both the context from which the text emerged and the modern context in which it is interpreted need to be exposed. Thus, the ideologies of the dominant class in ancient texts, and specifically during the time of text production, need to be teased out in the present task of reading the text in South Africa. In this task, Mosala's Black biblical hermeneutic of liberation demands of the modern reader of the Bible to pay attention to the struggle of the exploited working-class people and the poor. It must be said, however, that Mosala also draws on Gottwald's liberationist approach to the Bible, which adds a curious dimension to his hermeneutic. Based on his view of "the reality that economic systems cannot be 'imported' from the Bible to meet our needs", Gottwald (1993:345) decisively argues that

the ethical force of the Bible on issues of economics will have to be perspectival and motivational rather than prescriptive and technical.

Thus, in light of Gottwald's argument and Mosala's hermeneutical lens, I submit that, in order for our reading to be liberative, we ought to adopt a hermeneutic suitable for a socio-economic discourse. This approach enables us to read Isaiah 58 in a way that is relevant to the South African context. However, Gottwald (1999:35) cautions us about simply determining liberative lessons from not-so-liberative texts, specifically with respect to what appears to be economic relief texts of the Bible. Thus, this article will take Gottwald's warning seriously, as I inquire whether Isaiah 58 was meant to protect the interests of a particular group.

Although this article draws on Mosala's approach to hermeneutics, it also departs from it in the sense that the African philosophical concept of *Ubuntu* is also employed in the reading of Isaiah 58. In addition to Mosala's approach, I shall use the African philosophy as a theoretical framework, with specific focus on *Ubuntu*. The values that emerge from the discussion of the African philosophy will be employed as a point of reference to determine the possible life-setting of Isaiah 58, which will be brought into conversation with the South African context. Finally, I shall consider the liberating possibilities that Isaiah 58 offers to the oppressed Black people in Southern Africa.

2. MOSALA'S BLACK BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS OF LIBERATION

In his thesis, *Biblical hermeneutics and Black theology in South Africa*, Mosala (1987:x, 38-47) employs historical-critical methods – even though he is well aware of their Euro-American origins – in order to identify and locate a particular layer or stratum within the biblical context. He locates the stratum in the power dynamics of society, in order to show the variant voices and interests of the class sectors in ancient Israel. Mosala further shows that the ideologies of the composers of biblical texts were either oppressive or liberative. His Black biblical hermeneutics of liberation maintains that

the task of the biblical cultural worker involved in the struggle for freedom from poverty is to liberate the Bible so that the Bible can liberate us (Mosala 1991a:21; 1995:239).

What this means is that the liberating possibilities of the text need to be teased out by highlighting the oppressive ideologies of the dominant class at the time of the production of the ancient text. Mosala's Black biblical hermeneutics of liberation demands that the modern reader of the Bible pay attention to the struggles of the exploited working-class people or the poor.

It is interesting to note that Mosala's Black biblical hermeneutics of liberation is linked to the Black theology of liberation. The latter shows that God tends to intervene decisively against forms of oppression and exploitation in favour of the poor (Mosala 1996:21; cf. Mgojo 1977:28). This intervention is often expressed as the preferential option for the poor (cf. Hopkins 2002:54). Thus, the Black theology of liberation calls for solidarity with the oppressed people in the margins of society (Cone 1989:151-152; 1992:21, 53; Tshaka 2014:1-2). The fact that Mosala's theoretical framework is also rooted in the Black theology of liberation, specifically with regards to the preferential option for the poor, makes his Black biblical hermeneutic of liberation attractive.

Mosala's (1987:xi) Black biblical hermeneutic of liberation is guided by the theoretical position of historical materialism, a framework associated with Karl Marx. Not only does the framework give priority to social relations, specifically in terms of class, race and gender in both the biblical text and the modern context, it equally advances the interests of the poor (Mosala 1997:57-58). Marxism, a theoretical framework that Mosala adopts, regards the act of overthrowing the imperialistic and capitalistic ruling élites by the proletariat as justice, in that it seeks to enforce economic equality (Degenaar 1982:11). However, Marxism does not seem to be entirely

innocent, as it is also a theory that is set to take over power with the aim of centralising it within the leadership of the proletariat (Degenaar 1982:27). Capitalism may persist in the epoch of Marxism. It is interesting to note that class struggle may experience challenges under socialism, mainly because, according to Marx, socialism as a newly born society would still

in every respect, economically, morally, and intellectually, be stamped with the birthmarks of the old society from whose womb it emerges (Guo 2013:103).

The implications of the preceding view are that a newly born society would produce capitalism and class conflicts, which, in turn, would end only after a considerable period when full communism would be attained.

In the context of socio-political discourses, Mosala builds on the views of West and Eagleton. In the context of biblical studies, he draws on the liberationist work of Gottwald. It is, therefore, helpful to examine briefly the works of West, Eagleton, and Gottwald in order to appreciate Mosala's Black biblical hermeneutics of liberation. On the political implications of Marxism, Mosala (2006:134-135) notes West's (1981:256) remarks thus:

For the oppressed colored ([B]lack) peoples, the central problem is not only repressive capitalist regimes, but also oppressive European civilizing attitudes. And even Marxists who reject oppressive capitalist regimes often display oppressive European civilizing attitudes toward colored peoples. In this sense, such Marxists, though rightly critical of capitalism, remain captives of the worst of European culture.

In light of the preceding remark, this article partly departs from Mosala's Black biblical hermeneutics of liberation. A theoretical framework based on Marxism also has negative traits. It is puzzling that Mosala continues to base his Black biblical hermeneutic of liberation on Marxism, even though he is well aware of West's view that Marxism as a theoretical framework is captive to Europeaness, and for this reason, it has been shunned by postcolonial biblical criticism (Boer 1998:24-48). It is important to note that Mao Tse-Tung's Maoism and Julius Nyerere's Ujamaa as well as Mtshiselwa's African liberationist paradigm modified the European Marxist theory to suit their respective contexts.² It must be noted that the Marxist theory has offered biblical studies a valuable tool, particularly with regard to the understanding of the historical mode of production which enables us to locate our exegetical work within the socio-historical systems in the world of the text's production (cf. West 2011:513-514, 529; Mtshiselwa 2015a:17).

2 For a detailed study, see Nyerere (1966); Tse-Tung (2007); Hsü (1990); Guo (2013); Mtshiselwa (2015a).

Mosala also identifies with Eagleton's *The revolt of the reader*. In this contribution, Eagleton (1986:182) argues as follows:

That the reader should be forcibly subjected to textual authority is disturbing enough; that they should be insultingly invited to hug their chains, merge into empathetic harmony with their oppressors to the point where they befuddledly cease to recognize whether they are subject or object, worker, boss, or product is surely the ultimate opiate.

Based on Eagleton's argument, Mosala (2002:84) proposes a revolutionary reading of the Hebrew Bible which is critical of the contributions of the political élites who created the indebtedness of the poor in the history of Israel. In my view, Mosala's proposal is impressive, as it demands of a modern reader of the Hebrew Bible to tease out instances in which the poor experienced oppression in the world of text production. Furthermore, Mosala's hermeneutic insists that a socially engaged reader of the Bible uncovers cases in which the composers of the ancient texts showed bias towards the poor. Thus, Mosala's Black biblical hermeneutic of liberation can be viewed as liberative. Similarly, an African liberationist reading of Isaiah 58, one that stands in continuity with Mosala's liberationist reading of the Hebrew Bible, will also highlight the ideological contestations in the text. It will be argued, in this instance, that the various strata in the biblical text are in dialogue and contestation with each other.

Mosala also draws on Gottwald's liberationist approach to the Bible, which adds a different dimension to his hermeneutic. For instance, based on "the reality that economic systems cannot be 'imported' from the Bible to meet our needs", Gottwald (1993:345) argues that "the ethical force of the Bible on issues of economics will have to be perspectival and motivational rather than prescriptive and technical". Given the arguments of both authors, I submit that, in order for an African liberationist re-reading of Isaiah 58 to be considered liberative, it ought to adopt a hermeneutic suitable for a socio-economic discourse. This approach enables us to re-read the given text in a way that is relevant, for example, to the South African context. However, Gottwald (1999:35) cautions us about easily discerning liberative lessons from not-so-liberative texts, specifically in terms of the economic relief laws of the Bible which were designed by kings and priests. Thus, an African liberationist reading of Isaiah 58 will take into account Gottwald's warning, as it probes the possible social prejudice behind the composition of Isaiah 58.

Although the African liberationist approach proposed, in this instance, draws on Mosala's liberationist framework, it departs from his theory and method as noted earlier. No doubt, an African liberationist reading of

Isaiah 58 that draws on Mosala's liberationist approach would benefit from cultural resources, which inherently stand in continuity with postcolonial biblical studies. These cultural resources include indigenous narratives, idioms, proverbs, and liberation songs, which are part of the African philosophy. The relevance of African philosophy is not foreign to the field of Old Testament studies. Masenya (ngwan'a Mphahlele), among others, has explored the concept of *Ubuntu* as an aspect of African philosophy, and her contribution will now be considered alongside the views of Ramose on *Ubuntu*.

African philosophy is said to comprise stories, legends, sayings, proverbs, and songs; therefore, Masenya (ngwan'a Mphahlele)'s (2011:83; cf. Gericke 2009:327) use of African proverbs in interpreting the Bible is noteworthy. For instance, she employs the Northern Sotho saying, *Motho ke motho ka batho*, meaning "I am because we are", or "we are because I am" to relate to women's issues. She argues that,

[t]aking the Botho/Ubuntu concept seriously implies that the liberation of all African women in South Africa calls for the involvement of all South Africans irrespective of their race, ethnicity, gender and socio-economic class among others (Masenya [ngwan'a Mphahlele] 2011:83).

In this case, the African concept of *Ubuntu* is said to offer liberating possibilities – human dignity – to many South African women who are oppressed. For Masenya (ngwan'a Mphahlele), humaneness or human dignity, a term she prefers, problematises the issue of poverty, as it suggests that poverty deprives people of their dignity. The proverb *Molomo ge o eja o roga wo mongwe*, translated literally as "[a] mouth which eats, swears at the one which does not eat", shows that the dignity of the poor is often at stake in a situation of poverty (Masenya [ngwan'a Mphahlele] 2012:457; cf. Rakoma 1970:178). Masenya (ngwan'a Mphahlele) (2012:453) also points out that

[t]he African ancestor was right when he lamented that *moroto wa tšhego, o elela le leoto*, the urine of scarcity flows along the (female) leg in his/her attempt to portray the harsh reality of perpetual poverty.

No doubt, African philosophy, specifically the concept of *Ubuntu*, refutes the inhumaneness that poverty creates, particularly among the majority of South Africans.

Furthermore, the affirmation of humanity, which is expressed in the philosophical concept of *Ubuntu* through the slogan "Black is beautiful" (Woods 1978:192; Masenya [ngwan'a Mphahlele] 2014:1-3) is both a protest and an affirmation, since blackness was not associated with

anything beautiful or good in the colonial and apartheid eras in South Africa (Masenya [ngwan'a Mphahlele] 2014:5). Although the slogan, "Black is beautiful" originated in the United States, it was, however, appropriate to the South African context. Concerning appropriation, Black South Africans were viewed as less than human (Boesak 1977:26; Vellem 2012:348; Dolamo 2013:6). Therefore, the slogan opposed the portrayal of colonists as superior to the "Black" race, which subsequently created second-class citizens out of Black South Africans (Vellem 2012:348; Dolamo 2013:6). In line with Vellem's observation that Blacks were relegated to the level of second-class citizens, Saayman (2011:178) also links the issue of poverty to the perception of Black South Africans as being less than human (cf. Vellem 2012:348). Thus, the above views clarify the understanding of *Ubuntu* in the context of socio-economic injustice.

Ramose's thesis on African philosophy and the concept of *Ubuntu* is attractive, as it offers an interesting contextual perspective. He argues

that reconciliation as a legislative Act was stillborn because of its objective reinforcement of the poverty and wealth divide. Reconciliation is more suitable for the advancement of nation-building in South Africa (Ramose 2012:20).

He borrows the term "reconciliation" from Obinna (2003:2):

The word "reconciliation" which the computer mistakes for 'reconciliation' may be unfamiliar, but it is not totally strange. "Recon" the first part in the word "reconciliation" means to bring together. "Filiation" the second part has a relationship with the words "filial" and "affiliate" both of which evoke a sense of belonging that approximates that of son or daughter in a family. "Filius" and "Filia" are the Latin for son and daughter respectively. Much more directly and, as I will use it in my talk, the word "reconciliation" with verb forms reaffiliate, affiliate and reaffiliate describes and defines the fact of granting, effecting, regaining, and reclaiming the right of sonship and daughtership in a family fellowship with other sons and daughters of the family. Though reconciliation is closely related to reconciliation it adds an absolute dimension to the peace-making and harmonizing thrust of reconciliation by emphasizing the equal dignity of all persons who need to be reconciled.

Thus, "reconciliation" refers to a way of life, in which the persons who are reconciled are not only brought to live together but also led to share equal right to dignity. In this way of life, the value of equality is crucial. Unlike Obinna, however, Ramose employs the term "reconciliation"

interchangeably with *Ubuntu*. For instance, he (Ramosé 2012:37) concludes his article with the statement:

I have proposed the option for reconfiliation in part because it is the lived and living experience of those in the margin of South African society.

In other words, *Ubuntu* (reconfiliation), as a lived and living philosophy, is logically illustrated by the way in which people at a relational level are typified by the shared equal right to dignity. Therefore, through *Ubuntu*, African philosophy refutes the persistent unjust, unequal, and inhumane poverty that is commonly experienced by Black South Africans. Furthermore, given Ramosé's and Obinna's idea of 'reconfiliation', it would be logical to question the legitimacy and integrity of any process of reconciliation, which fails to offer equal right to dignity to the two parties involved in such a process. In other words, if inequality persists between the subjects of reconciliation, then the nature of the reconciliation process becomes suspect and inconclusive.

Based on the philosophical contributions of selected Old Testament scholars and African philosophers, the consideration of a hermeneutics that is enthused by *Ubuntu* is warranted. On a hermeneutical level, the thoughts and values that emanate from the discourse of African philosophy may be employed as a point of reference in our quest for the possible life-setting of Isaiah 58. Such thoughts and values include:

- Communalism as opposed to individualism.
- Inhumanness that poverty creates.
- Redress of oppression.
- Equal right to dignity.

3. RE-READING ISAIAH 58 IN THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN CONTEXT

This study focuses on the conflict in Yehud as well as on socio-economic injustice and oppression in Yehud that is hinted at in Isaiah 58. The text will be brought into conversation with the South African context.

3.1 Conflict in Yehud

On the conflict underlying the statements made in Isaiah 58, we wonder who were actually involved and what was the bone of contention. A word on the dynamics of the post-exilic period between the group of the returnees and

the Judeans, who were not deported to Babylonia, among others, is therefore in order. Various scholars have long pointed out the conflict between these groups (cf. Blenkinsopp 1989:69; Smith-Christopher 1994:243-265; Kessler 2006:91-121; cf. Nihan 2011a:67). Although Blenkinsopp (2003:167) claims that the addressees of Isaiah 58:1-5 are the Judeans in Yehud, the point that there are other groups who were in conflict also holds. For instance, Knoppers (2006:265-289) proposes the conflict between the Judeans and the Samaritans where the latter group claimed to be heir of "Israel", whilst Bedford (2002:147-165) and Kessler (2006:137-166) suggest a conflict between Diaspora and homeland groups. As Nihan (2011a:67) noted,

Aramaic ostraca from Idumea dating to the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.E. point to the importance of Edomite presence in southern Palestine.

(Cf. Willi 1995:30-33; Lemaire 2006:413-456; Porten & Yardeni 2006:457-488). The preceding point is equally made in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah by means of the continuous reference to the "people of the land(s)" (cf. Ezra 3:3; 9:1; 10:2; Neh. 9:24, 30; 10:29; Nihan 2011a:67). The point that there were various social groups in post-exilic Yehud is thus indisputable.

Regarding the bone of contention among the social groups in post-exilic Yehud, Nihan (2011a:67-104) points out the issue of identity and ethnicity. The parallel made by the reference to "Jacob" between Isaiah 58:1, 14 and Ezekiel 28:25; 37:25; 39:25 suggests that the issue of identity was a bone of contention in the relational dynamics between several social groups. On identity, the mention of Daniel in Ezekiel 28:3 provides a clue about the identity of a diaspora group, whilst the 'stranger' suggests foreigners. Ezekiel 28:25 refers to "house of Israel" and "servant Jacob" at the same time, suggesting the existence of different identities. Ezekiel 28:25 also mentions the "Gentiles". Furthermore, the fact that Ezekiel 37:25 distinguishes between "Jacob My servant" and "My servant David" suggests two groups. Ezekiel 39:25 mentions "the captives of Jacob", an identity that is carried in Isaiah 58, specifically with reference to the oppression of people from the house of Jacob. These texts suggest that identity was contested in post-exilic Yehud. It is important to note that Old Testament commentators mention the emphasis on Sabbath as an identity marker of the Judean ethnos in both Isaiah 58:13-14 and Nehemiah 9:14; 10:31, 33; 13:15-22 (cf. Rofé 1985:213-217; Koenen 1990:223-224; Ruszkowski 2000:156-159; Blenkinsopp 2003:135; Nihan 2011a:68). Not only does Isaiah 58:13-14 suggest the idea of "keeping the Sabbath", but also insists that the Sabbath must be kept from being profaned and trampled. The purification of the Sabbath thus becomes the identity marker of the Judeans in the text. It is interesting to note the juxtaposition of the

“house of Jacob” with the Sabbath in Ezekiel 20:5, 12, a text that is dated to the Persian period. The reference to self-interest, placed alongside the Sabbath and “Jacob”, suggests that the Judeans showed a lack of insight into the real meaning of fasting as more than just a ritual. Fasting was a humbling exercise in their relationship to YHWH. It is thus reasonable to view Isaiah 58 as a text that partly addressed the formalistic practices of Judeans’ religion, which did not exhibit the personal commitment and understanding of their dependency on YHWH. There is much more to the reference to self-interest, which is placed alongside the Sabbath. Isaiah 58 also reflects socio-economic issues, such as the land question and socio-economic justice, which constitute the bone of contention in post-exilic Yehud.

It is widely accepted that Babylonian exile returnees sought to claim the so-called “empty land” (cf. Schwartz 1996:15, 36; Zenger 1997:219; Grünwaldt 1999:375-381; Otto 1999:134; 2009:139; Meyer 2005:223; Brueggemann 2003:113; Meyer 2014:505; Lev. 25:10; Mtshiselwa 2015a:291). The view that Jerusalem and the surrounding areas were depopulated during the Babylonian exile contrasts with the argument that the land was not empty (Barstad 2003:3-20; Becking 2006:7; cf. Mtshiselwa 2016:68). The indigenous Judeans who were not deported to Babylonia occupied the land. A case in point on the issue of land occupation and ownership in ancient Israel is

the claim attributed to the indigenous Judeans, those not deported, to be the authentic descendants of Abraham, and therefore to hold title to the land, including the estates vacated by the deportees (Blenkinsopp 2011:471).

The claim ensued from the report that the deportees had wandered far away from YHWH; hence, the land was given to the indigenous Judeans, the so-called people of the land, as an inheritance, according to Ezekiel 11:14-16 and 33:23-29. It is important to note that the claim that “the deportees have been expelled from the cult community and have therefore forfeited title to their land” suggests that the indigenous Judeans in the exilic and post-exilic periods possessed the title to the land. Ezekiel 33:24; 36:1-5 and Exodus 6:8 further throw light on the claim attributed to the indigenous Judeans, because the texts show that the land was given to them as an inheritance (Blenkinsopp 2011:472). The idea of inheritance is contained in the Abrahamic promise of land. Blenkinsopp (2011:472) asserts that

Abraham was promised the land for his posterity, but he himself only came into possession of a small plot of land, and he did so by purchasing it, not by inheriting it (cf. Gen. 23:1-20).

It is interesting that the debate on the “empty land” in post-exilic Yehud could be paralleled to the view that, in the history of land dispossession in South Africa, the Boer (Afrikaner) Trekkers believed that a part of South Africa’s land was “empty land” (Pheko 1984:61). That the Orange Free State Afrikaner Trekkers took the land that was first occupied by the Basotho people under the kingship of Moshoeshoe supports the preceding view. However, as Mtshiselwa (2015:292) noted:

the Afrikaner Trekkers’ situation differs from that of the Babylonian élite returnees who sought to reclaim their land, that is, the so-called ‘empty land’ in Yehud ... The Afrikaner Trekkers were not returning to their homeland, but they sought the land that was first occupied by the Basotho people under the kingship of Moshoeshoe [while in postexilic Yehud the returnees] sought the land which they owned prior to their deportation to Babylonia.

However, a cardinal question to ask, especially from an African liberationist perspective, is: Does the point that the ruling élites contributed to land and economic equality in Persian Yehud hold in the reading of Isaiah 58?

The issue of land created a conflict that was based not only on identity, but also on class. The point that in South Africa identity is linked to the land, particularly in the rural context, makes one wonder whether, in the rural Yehud, land was linked to identity. For instance, as Vellem (2016:7) noted,

at Thabo Mbeki Village, land eviction is tantamount to parting ways with the family graves, the places where others have their umbilical cords buried and thus parting with their identity, which is impossible to imagine without land.

For instance, 1 Kings 21:1-29, a post-exilic text that also reflects a monarchic period, bears some resemblance to the South African context, particularly with regard to the way in which land inheritance is based not only on economic survival, but also on family identity. In the post-exilic context, land became a contentious subject in the discourse about class and identity categories that resulted in segregation. The Persian ideology of segregation created class and identity categories among the Judeans (cf. Römer 2005:169, 171). For instance, the distinction between the walled cities and village houses, which clearly marked a distinction between the Golah élites (who returned from the Babylonian exile) and the people of the land (the poor from rural Yehud), supports this view. Throughout the Monarchic, Neo-Assyrian, and Neo-Babylonian periods and even during the Persian period, the rich and powerful élites, who resided in the cities, owned large portions of agricultural, wealth-producing land (Knight

2011:202). Thus, the rich élites, whose productive land was managed by the poor Israelites, most likely lived in cities. As the proverb *Molomo ge o eja o roga wo mongwe* attests, the dignity of the poor was at stake in post-exilic Yehud, especially in the case of economic inequality between the rich élites and those who lived in the rural areas (cf. Rakoma 1970:178; Masenya [ngwan'a Mphahlele] 2012:457). It, therefore, comes as no surprise that Isaiah 58 raises the issue of economic injustice. Given the issues of economic inequality, classism, and the adverse treatment of the poor from rural Yehud, McNutt's (1999:200-202) observation of the conflict between the returning exiles and those who were not deported to Babylonia, namely the so-called 'people of the land', would make sense. It is clear that the conflict was not only fuelled by the existing power dynamics in the society, but also by the economic inequalities in post-exilic Yehud, that is, the conflict between the rich and the poor. Drawing on Saayman's (2011:178) and Vellem's (2012:348) views on class, and more importantly based on an African liberationist reading of Isaiah 58, it is reasonable to argue that those who remained in in post-exilic Yehud were relegated to the level of second-class citizens. The point that the poor worked large portions of agricultural, wealth-producing land owned by the rich and powerful élites who resided in the cities supports the preceding argument (cf. Knight 2011:202).

Venter (2012:8) has convincingly argued that, in post-exilic Yehud

the conflict occurred between different social groups; Trito-Isaiah takes the part of the oppressed and reprimands the upper class for its political and economic oppression

of the poor. The allusion to quarrel and fight as well as to the idea of striking one with a wicked fist in Isaiah 58:4 hints at the existence of conflict among the addressees of Trito-Isaiah. The pointing of the finger and the speaking of evil in verse 9 equally suggest a situation of conflict. Furthermore, there are few, if any, signs of equal right to dignity in Isaiah 58 which presupposes the possibility of conflict between the rich élites and those who were homeless (v. 7), without clothes (v. 7), oppressed (vv. 3, 6), hungry – poor (vv. 7, 10). Therefore, it is clear that there was a conflict between the rich and the poor. From an African philosophical point of view and, in particular, based on Ramose's advocacy for equal right to dignity, it may be understood that economic inequality perpetuated the conflict between the rich and the poor. However, it is worthy to note that the state of "reconciliation" is non-existent in the post-exilic context of Isaiah 58, because the way of life, in which the social groups (i.e., rich élite and the poor) were to be reconciled, did not bring them to live together and did not

lead them to share equal right to dignity brought by economic justice (cf. Obinna 2003:2; Ramose 2012:20).

There was yet another conflict between the Persian Empire and the Jews who ceased to be loyal to the Empire. Bolin (2014:152; cf. Wiesehöfer 2009:89-90) observed a tendency by the imperialist Persian government to employ local élites to help maintain imperial oversight. However, the point that Wiesehöfer (2009:89-90) shows the assimilative tactics of the Persian Empire to control Yehud is worthy of note. Examples are Sheshbazzar, Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah who were appointed by the Persian Empire. With respect to the imperialist Persian government, Bolin (2014:152-153) highlights the point that those who benefited from imperial links did not long for the

restoration of an indigenous monarchy and would have found the often negative portrayal of David justification for Persian rule in their own days.

This was meant to express a perspective of those Jews loyal to the Empire on governance of Yehud; hence, their way of reading 1-2 Samuel. However, there is also a hint at a conflict between the Empire and the Jews. After Nehemiah had “provoked conflicts with his harsh dissociating policy”, it is not surprising that the Persian king appointed a governor of Persian origin, namely Bagohi (Albertz 2011:486). The conflict among the Judeans had an effect on the Persian administration following a Persian neutral figure Bagohi’s appointment which depicts an imperial strategy to minimise conflict between the two conflicting Jewish groups, the exilic returnees and those who remained in Yehud (cf. Albertz 2011:486). The appointment of both the Persian and non-Persian officials was clearly intended to serve the interests of the Persian Empire. Stability was in the interests of the Empire. As Mtshiselwa (2015b:2) observed, “loyalty to the empire from the less powerful was often required” (cf. Balentine 1996:138; Berquist 1995:131-137; Jonker 2010:298). It makes sense, therefore, to argue that criticism of the government in any form as well as the conflict that threatened the stability of Yehud were not tolerated in post-exilic Yehud. From an African liberationist perspective, a question to ask is: In South Africa, or anywhere else on the African continent, are there conflicts which come close to those experienced in post-exilic Yehud? On the issue of conflict in Africa, in general, Meredith (2014:596-597) remarks:

In practice, one-party systems were used by African leaders to suppress any sign of opposition and to keep themselves in power. The parties they led served only as a stronghold of privileged elites. Stage by stage, they accumulated ever greater personal power, preferring

to rule not through constitutions or through state institutions such as parliament, but by exercising vast system of patronage, dispensing jobs, contracts and favours in exchange for political support. Parliaments, where they survived, were packed with placemen, chosen for their known obedience. Government bureaucracies were staffed by party loyalists. Trade unions and farmers' organisations were subordinated to the interest of the government. The press existed merely as an outlet for government propaganda. Political debate became a matter of platitudes and praise-songs. Rarely was criticism of any kind tolerated.

As in the treatment of Nehemiah who later criticised the Persian government, it seems that, in Africa, criticism of the government is not tolerated either. Only the loyalists survive in the political arena. As mentioned earlier, the protests over minimum wage in South Africa also show conflict between the rich and the poor, which bears resemblance to the situation in post-exilic Yehud as reflected in Isaiah 58. No doubt, the issues raised in Isaiah 58 are not far from the issues being experienced in the African context. Thus, it is reasonable to determine whether Isaiah 58 could offer liberating possibilities for the oppressed Black people in South Africa, if read from an African liberationist perspective.

3.2 Socio-economic injustice and oppression

Isaiah 58 is related to Isaiah 56, a text that opens with an exhortation to keep justice and do what is right. In the case of Isaiah 56, keeping justice is paralleled to keeping the Sabbath (cf. Nihan 2011a:73). Similarly, it seems that the idea of Sabbath in Isaiah 58 is articulated alongside a call for justice. It is widely accepted that Isaiah 58:1-9a is a call to justice in terms of feeding the poor in post-exilic Yehud (Smith 1995:205; Berges 1998:61; Groenewald 2011:98). The idea of sharing bread with the hungry suggests the existence of poverty detected in Isaiah 58, as it presupposes that the addressees of Trito-Isaiah did not share their resources with the less privileged in the community. The refusal to share their bread also presupposes an individualistic and capitalist approach to economic resources rather than a communal one. It equally suggests that the lack of communalism among the addressees of Isaiah 58 entrenched the inhumaneness created by poverty. Thus, Ben Zvi (2013:382) correctly notes that Isaiah 58:6-10 is oblivious of the situation in post-exilic Yehud (cf. Is. 59:1-15a). The modern context also appears to be struggling with

the issue of poverty, just as in the context of Trito-Isaiah. For instance, ElBaradei (2015)³ describes the situation of poverty in Africa, in general:

Poverty and hunger persist at horrific levels; conflicts have been left to fester for generations; brutal repression and denial of human dignity are the hallmarks of a third of the world's nations; the sanctity of life depends on who is dying and where; rich countries are apathetic to the plight of the poor; inequality in the distribution of wealth amongst and within countries has reached unprecedented levels ... Over two billion people struggle to survive on less than \$ 2 a day, and over one billion live in extreme poverty on less than \$ 1.25 a day, with almost half of those in Africa. Some 900 million people do not have enough to eat. Millions die every year because of lack of access to medical care. Millions of refugees live in squalor yearning for a home. In contrast, the richest one percent will own more than all the rest by 2016, and the 80 richest individuals now have as much money as the poorest 3.5 billion. These are not just numbers. The plight of the poor is invariably compounded by and results in a lack of good governance, oppression, human rights abuses, marginalization and a deep sense of injustice and anger.

No doubt, the African continent also experiences poverty, which, according to Masenya (ngwan'a Mphahlele), deprives people of their dignity. Thus, not only was the issue of hunger – need for food – a bone of contention in post-exilic Yehud, but it also sheds light on the experiences of the addressees of Isaiah 58, reminding us of the experiences of poverty in post-apartheid South Africa. Based on the General Household Survey (GHS) data from 2002 to 2011, Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) reports that the poorest 40% of households received, on average, an income of less than R650 per person per month, whereas the poorest 20% of households earned less than R325 per person per month. On average, 61.4% of poor people in South Africa are Blacks compared to 4.35% of Whites (Stats SA 2012:71). Besides the index on poverty, Stats SA also offers data on racial inequality in South Africa. In 2012 and in terms of gender inequality and poverty, 55.2% of women lived in poor households as opposed to approximately 50% of men. Of the 55.2% of women, approximately 62.4% are Black women, 4.3% are White women, and 15.1% are Indian/Asian women, whereas 40.5% are Coloured women (Stats SA 2012:71). Although literature on Isaiah 58 does not shed light on the approximate percentage of Jews who were poor in the late exilic and post-exilic periods, as the statistics on poverty in South Africa does, it may be deduced that poverty was a reality in both contexts (i.e., of the

3 See <http://mg.co.za/article/2015-05-28-africans-have-to-pull-together-to-create-peace-and-prosperity-on-the-continent/>.

production of Isaiah 58 and South Africa). Based on the concept of *Ubuntu* in African philosophy, an African liberationist reader of the Hebrew Bible would oppose the persistent unjust, unequal, and inhumane reality of poverty commonly experienced by both the addressees of Trito-Isaiah and Black South Africans.

Furthermore, the phrase “serving your own interests”, which is mentioned twice in Isaiah 58 (see vv. 3, 13), confirms the self-enriching tendencies by the rich which perpetuated poverty that is noticeable in the text. In light of the idea of sharing equal right to dignity that is espoused by *Ubuntu*, it would appear that, in Isaiah 58:3, 13, the author is concerned about inequality which surfaced in the self-enriching tendencies of the élites. Thus, the individualistic approach to the accumulation of wealth by the rich élites in post-exilic Yehud is rejected in favour of the ideal of communalism expressed by Trito-Isaiah in the advocacy for feeding the poor (cf. Is. 58:1-9a). On the issue of self-enrichment by the ruling élites in the modern context, Meredith (2014:xvii) writes:

Once the momentum to oust colonial rule had subsided, older loyalties and ambitions came thrusting to the fore, often exploited by politicians for their own ends. African leaders became preoccupied with gaining a monopoly of power, preferring to rule through systems of patronage to enforce their control. Ruling elites seized every opportunity for self-enrichment, looting state assets at will. Decades were lost in internal conflicts, mismanagement and corruption.

Creating a gap between the rich and the poor is inevitable in a situation where self-enrichment tendencies surface. On that point, Meredith (2014:600) also comments:

Although politicians in power still issued promises about social equality and spoke eloquently about the needs of the common man, the gap between the rich elite living in plush villas, elegant apartment buildings and town house[s], and the masses surviving in slum and *bidonvilles* on the fringes of town, became ever more noticeable. For the vast majority of the population, independence brought few of the changes they had been led to expect.

Over 20 years into democracy, South Africa is still faced with the issue of economic inequality, and the gap between the rich and the poor continues to widen. Similarly, in Isaiah 58, Trito-Isaiah also expresses concern about the oppression of the working-class people in post-exilic Yehud. The reference to oppressed workers in Isaiah 58:3 supports Ben Zvi's (2013:382) claim that there was rampant injustice in the workplace at the time when Trito-Isaiah was composed. Textual evidence from Isaiah

58:3 shows that the working-class people were exploited. Furthermore, Nehemiah 5:1-13, which is a post-exilic text, describes a scenario in which Judean landowners were forced to sell their ancestral estate and, ultimately, became indentured slaves working on the estate of other wealthy Judeans (Nihan 2011b:131). We are reminded of Mosala's (1991b:40) observation that the colonial and apartheid rulers

dispossessed the Africans of their land and created out of them a wage class with nothing but their labour power to sell.

In addition, in the case of the Jews in the post-exilic period, it is clear that they were relegated to a wage class and exploited proletariat who were viewed simply as slaves (cf. Neh. 9:36-37). In the South African context, the protest within the labour sector suggests that South Africa's working-class people are also exploited. Similar protests occur in Swaziland. It was reported that

[h]undreds of people with HIV took to the streets of Swaziland to protest over poor health service ... reduced patient services because nurses were striking over unpaid wages (*Mail & Guardian* 2011:1)⁴.

If the poor were not being exploited, the Trade Union Congress of Swaziland would not exist. Therefore, in terms of the exploitation of the poor, clear similarities between the post-exilic context of Isaiah 58 and the modern context can be observed.

The conflict triggered by the land issue, which was based not only on identity, but also on class, recalls the debate on land and poverty in South Africa. No doubt, Isaiah 58 presupposes the possibility of conflict between the rich élites and those who were homeless (v. 7), without clothes (v. 7), oppressed (vv. 3, 6), and hungry – poor (vv. 7, 10). As Mtshiselwa (2015:83) observed, the negotiations for a democratic South Africa contain a tension between the Black South African political élites and the White political élites, which resulted in the suffering of the ordinary poor and the working-class people:

This tension can be viewed as a power struggle in which at the end the winner often takes all or an inequitable sharing of resources happens.

The negotiated Constitution of South Africa, especially the principle of “willing-seller, willing-buyer”, alienates the poor from owning land which was historically re-possessed from them by the colonists who were of the

4 See <http://mg.co.za/article/2011-07-29-hivpositive-swazis-protest-over-sick-service>.

view that some land in South Africa was empty, that is, not occupied (cf. Mtshiselwa & Tshaka 2015:58). The Constitution does not

consider how exploitation had forced [B]lacks to remain poor while [W]hites with the help of apartheid were lifted above poverty (Mtshiselwa & Tshaka 2015:60).

It is important to note that the manner in which apartheid assisted White South Africans is captured by this popular anecdote:

When the [W]hite man came to Africa, the African had land and the [W]hite man had the Bible. The [W]hite man said to the African: 'close your eyes and let us pray'. At the end of the prayer, the [W]hite man had the land and the African had the Bible (Maluleke 2008:685).

This anecdote recalls the argument that the *Natives Land Act* of 1913 triggered the poverty of Black people in South Africa (Modise & Mtshiselwa 2013:359-378). Similar to the South African context, Nehemiah 5, a post-exilic text that provides a background to Isaiah 58, confirms the point that, in Yehud, for some Judeans, loss of land led to poverty. It is interesting to note, on the one hand, verses 1-2 show that there was a food shortage, whereas in verse 11 Nehemiah advocated for the return of fields, vineyards, olive orchards, and houses that belonged to the poor, on the other,. It is thus clear that, in the post-exilic period, the Judeans were faced with the challenge of loss of land and poverty (cf. Mtshiselwa 2015:248).

From an African liberationist perspective, Isaiah 58 is liberative in the sense that Trito-Isaiah questions the fact that the religious leaders in post-exilic Yehud were oblivious of the indignity that poverty created out of the Jews who were relegated to the level of second-class citizens. Thus, I agree with Venter (2012:8) that "Trito-Isaiah takes the part of the oppressed and reprimands the upper class for its political and economic oppression". It appears that Trito-Isaiah is an interlocutor of liberation, because the text refutes the exploitation of the working-class people, the unequal right to dignity, the indignity that poverty creates, and the tendency to use religion to sedate (and subsequently silence) the poor. As an African liberationist reader of the Old Testament, I find Trito-Isaiah an appealing model for an interlocutor of liberation in Southern Africa.

4. CONCLUSION

This article simultaneously drew on, and departed from Mosala's Black biblical hermeneutic of liberation in favour of a hermeneutic that is enthused by *Ubuntu* – an African philosophical notion. The main argument is that the

text of Isaiah 58 could contribute positively to socio-economic redress in terms of poverty alleviation and, subsequently, to building relationships in Southern Africa when read from an African liberationist perspective. Both the rich and the poor need to share the equal right to dignity. The issues of communalism as opposed to individualism, redressing the inhumaneness that poverty creates, redressing oppression, and the pursuit of equal right to dignity all shed light on a re-reading of Isaiah 58 in the Southern African context, with the view of offering liberating possibilities for poor Black people.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ALBERTZ, R.

2011. The controversy about Judean versus Israelite identity and the Persian government: A new interpretation of the Bagoses story (Jewish Antiquities XI.297-301). In: O. Lipschits, G.N. Knoppers & M. Oeming (eds), *Judah and the Judeans in the Achaemenid period: Negotiating identity in an international context*. (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns), pp. 483-504.

BALENTINE, S.E.

1996. The politics of religion in the Persian period. In: J. Barton & D.J. Reimer (eds), *After the exile: Essays in honour of Rex Mason* (Macon: Mercer University Press), pp. 129-146.

BERQUIST, J.L.

1995. *Judaism in Persia's shadow: A social and historical approach*. Minneapolis, MN: Minneapolis Fortress.

BARSTAD, H.

2003. After the "myth of the empty land": Major challenges in the study of Neo-Babylonian Judah. In: O. Lipschits & J. Blenkinsopp (eds), *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian period* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns), pp. 3-20.

BECKING, B.

2006. "We all returned as one!" Critical notes on the myth of the mass return. In: O. Lipschits & M. Oeming (eds), *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian period* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns), pp. 3-18.

BEDFORD, P.R.

2002. Diaspora: Homeland relations in Ezra-Nehemiah. *Vetus Testamentum* 52(2):147-165.

BEN ZVI, E.

2013. Isaiah, a memorable prophet: Why was Isaiah so memorable in the late Persian/early Hellenistic periods? Some observations. In: D.V. Edelman & E. Ben Zvi (eds), *Remembering biblical figures in the late Persian and early Hellenistic periods* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 356-383.

BERGES, U.

1998. *Das Buch Jesaja: Komposition und Endgestalt*. Freiburg: Herder.

BLINKINSOPP, J.

1989. *Ezra-Nehemiah: A commentary*. Old Testament Library. London: SCM.

2003. *Isaiah 56-66: A new translation with introduction and commentary*. New York: Doubleday.

2011. Judeans, Jews, Children of Abraham. In: O. Lipschits, G.N. Knoppers & M. Oeming (eds), *Judah and the Judeans in the Achaemenid period: Negotiating identity in an international context* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns), pp. 461-482.

BOER, R.

1998. Remembering Babylon: Postcolonialism and Australian biblical studies. In: R.S. Sugirtharajah (ed.), *The postcolonial Bible* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press), pp. 24-48.

BOESAK, A.

1977. *Farewell to innocence*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press.

BOLIN, T.M.

2014. 1-2 Samuel and Jewish Paideia in the Persian and Hellenistic periods. In: D.V. Edelman (ed.), *Deuteronomy-Kings as emerging authoritative books: A conversation* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature), pp. 133-158.

BRUEGGEMANN, W.

2003. *An introduction to the Old Testament: The canon and Christian imagination*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.

CONE, J.H.

1989. *Black theology and black power*. 20th anniversary ed.. New York: Harper & Row.

1992. *The blues and the spirituals*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis books.

DEGENAAR, J.J.

1982. *Marxism-Leninism and its implications for South Africa*. Pretoria: H & R Academia (Pty) Ltd.

DOLAMO, R.

2013. *Botho/Ubuntu: The heart of African ethics*. *Scriptura* 112(1):1-10.

EAGLETON, T.

1986. *Against the grain: Essays 1975-1985*. London: Verso.

ELBARADEI, M.

2015. Africans have to pull together to create peace and prosperity on the continent. [Online.] Available at: <http://mg.co.za/article/2015-05-28-africans-have-to-pull-together-to-create-peace-and-prosperity-on-the-continent/> [2015, 6 August].

GERICKE, J.W.

2009. "Brave new world": Towards a philosophical theology of the Old Testament. *Old Testament Essays* 22(2):321-345.

GOTTWALD, N.K.

1993. *How does social scientific criticism shape our understanding of the Bible as a resource for economic ethics?* Atlanta: Scholars Press.

1999. *The tribes of Yahweh: A sociology of the religion of liberated Israel 1250-1050 B.C.E.* Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.

GUO, S.

2013. *Chinese politics and government: Power, ideology and organization.* Abingdon: Routledge.

GROENEWALD, A.

2011. Isaiah 1:4-9 as a post-exilic reflection. *Journal for Semitics* 20(1):87-108.

GRÜNWARDT, K

1999. Das Heiligkeitsgesetz Leviticus 17-26: Ursprüngliche Gestalt, Tradition und Theologie (*The Holiness Code of Leviticus 17-26. Original form, tradition and theology*). Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

HOPKINS, D.N.

2002. *Heart and head: Black Theology, past, present and future.* New York: Palgrave.

Hsü, I.C.Y.

1990. *China without Mao: The search for a new order.* New York: Oxford University Press.

JONKER, L.C.

2010. Revisiting the Saul narrative in Chronicles: Interacting with the Persian imperial context? *Old Testament Essays* 23(2):283-305.

KESSLER, J.

2006. Persia's loyal Yawhists: Power identity and ethnicity in Acharmenid Yehud. In: O. Lipschits & M. Oeming (eds), *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian period* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns), pp. 91-121.

KNIGHT, D.A.

2011. *Law, power and justice in ancient Israel.* Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.

KNOPPERS, G.N.

2006. Revisiting the Samaritan question in the Persian Period. In: O. Lipschits & M. Oeming (eds), *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian period* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns), pp. 265-289.

KOENEN, K.

1990. *Ethik und eschatologie im Tritojesajabuch. Wissenschaftliche monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament* 62. Neukirchen-Cluyn: Neukirchener Verlag.

LEMAIRE, A.

2006. New Aramianaca from Idumea and their historical interpretation. In: O. Lipschits & M. Oeming (eds), *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period*. (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns), pp. 413-456.

Mail & Guardian

2011. HIV-positive Swazis protest over sick service. [Online.] Available at : <http://mg.co.za/article/2011-07-29-hivpositive-swazis-protest-over-sick-service> [2015, 6 August].

MALULEKE, T.S.

2008. Justice in post-apartheid South Africa: Towards a theology of restitution. *Verbum et Ecclesia* 29(3):681-696.

MASENYA (NGWAN'A MPHAPHELE), M.

2011. The woman of worth in Proverbs 31:10-31: Reread through a *bosadi* (womanhood) lens. In: T. Faix, H-G Wüncch & Meier, Elke (eds), *Theologie im Kontext von Biographie und Weltbild* (Marburg: Francke-Buchhandlung), pp. 79-96.

2012. Eating the louse and its larva! The indignity of poverty as embedded within selected African and Old Testament proverbs. *Scriptura* 111(3): 452-459.

2014. Black (humanity) is beautiful! Reading Biko and meditating on Psalm 8. *Theologia Viatorum* 38: 1-13.

McNUTT, P.

1999. *Reconstructing the Society of Ancient Israel*. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, London: SPCK.

MEREDITH, M.

2014. *The fortunes of Africa: A 5,000-year history of wealth, greed and endeavour*. Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers.

MEYER, E.E.

2005. *The Jubilee in Leviticus 25: a theological ethical interpretation from a South African perspective*. Münster: LIT Verlag.

2014. Returning to an empty land: Revisiting my old argument about Jubilee. *Old Testament Essays* 27(2):502-519.

MGOJO, E.K.M.

1977. Prolegomenon to the study of Black theology. *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 21:25-32.

MODISE, L. & MTSHISELWA, N.

2013. The *Natives Land Act* of 1913 engineered the poverty of Black South Africans: A historical-ecclesiastical perspective. *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 39(2):359-378.

MOSALA, I.J.

1987. *Biblical hermeneutics and Black theology in South Africa*. Unpublished Ph.D thesis. Cape Town: University of Cape Town.

1989. *Biblical hermeneutics and Black theology in South Africa*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans.

1991a. Wealth and poverty in the Old Testament: A Black theological perspective. *Journal of Black Theology in South Africa* 5(1):16-22.

1991b. Land, class and the Bible in South Africa today. *Journal of Black Theology in South Africa* 5(2):40-46.

1995. Reconstructing the Azanian *mišpāhôt* (clans): Land, class and Bible in South Africa today. In D. Smith-Christopher (ed.), *Text and experience: Towards a cultural exegesis of the Bible*, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press), pp. 238-246.

1996. Wealth and poverty in the Old Testament: A Black theological perspective. *Journal of Black Theology in South Africa* 5: 16-22.

1997. Ownership or non-ownership of land forms the basis of wealth and poverty: A Black theological perspective. In: G. Mongezi and L.A. Milton (eds.), *An African challenge to the Church in the twenty-first century* (Cape Town: South African Council of Churches), pp. 57-64.

2002. The politics of debt and the liberation of the scripture. In: R Boer (ed.), *Tracking 'the tribes of Yahweh': On the trial of a classic* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press), pp. 77-84.

2006. The implications of the text of Esther for African women's struggle for liberation in South Africa. In: R.S. Sugirtharajah (ed.), *The postcolonial biblical reader* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing), pp. 134-141.

MTSHISELWA, V.N.N.

2015a. Re-reading the Israelite Jubilee in Leviticus 25:8-55 in the context of land redistribution and socio-economic justice in South Africa: An African Liberationist perspective. Unpublished Ph.D thesis. Pretoria: Department of Biblical and Ancient Studies, University of South Africa.

2015b. The age of reinvented empire(s) in Africa in the light of Persian hegemonic power: Reading the books of Deuteronomy and Ezra-Nehemiah in the context of Zimbabwe. *Verbum et Ecclesia* 36(1):1-9.

2016. Who possessed the Promised Land? Scribal scholarship in the formation of patriarchal narrative(s) and the Holiness Code. *Semitica* 58:63-78.

MTSHISELWA, N & TSHAKA, R.S.

2015. Constricted economic freedom? Malcolm X's the Ballot or the Bullet Speech and Black Liberation theology in conversation with the South African Constitutional Property Clause. *Theologia Viatorum* 39(2):44-63.

NIHAN, C.

2011a. Ethnicity and identity in Isaiah 56-66. In: O. Lipschits, G.N. Knoppers & M. Oeming (eds), *Judah and the Judeans in the Achaemenid period: Negotiating identity in an international context* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns), pp. 67-104.

2011b. Resident aliens and natives in the Holiness Legislation. In: R. Achenbach, R. Albertz & J. Wöhrle (eds), *The foreign and the law: Perspectives from the Hebrew Bible and the ancient Near East* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag), pp. 111-134.

NYERERE, J.K.

1966. *Freedom and unity: Uhuru na umoja - A selection from writings and speeches, 1952-65*. London: Oxford University Press.

OBINNA, A.J.V.

2003. *Roots, branches ... graftings and fruits: The reconfiliatory challenge to African-Americans and humanity at large*. Unpublished paper presented at the Black Catholic Heritage Celebration, Charleston, SC.

OTTO, E.

1999. Innerbiblische exegese im heiligkeitsgesetz Levitikus 17-26. In: H.J. Fabry & H.W. Jüngling (eds.), *Levitikus als Buch* (Berlin, Philo: Bonner Biblische Beiträge), pp. 125-196.

2009. The Holiness Code in diachrony and synchrony in the legal hermeneutics of the Pentateuch. In: S. Shectman & J.S. Baden (eds), *The strata of the priestly writings: Contemporary debate and future directions* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich), pp. 135-156.

PHEKO, M.

1984. *Apartheid: The story of a dispossessed people*. London: Marram Books.

PORTEN, B. & YARDENI, A.

2006. Social, economic and onomastic issues in the Aramaic ostraca of the fourth century B.C.E. In: O. Lipschits & M. Oeming (eds), *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian period* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns), pp. 457-488.

RAKOMA, J.R.D.

1970. *Marema-ka-dika tša Sesotho sa leboa*. Pretoria: Van Schaik.

RAMOSE, M.B.

2012. Reconciliation and reconfiliation in South Africa. *Journal on African Philosophy* 5(1): 20-39.

ROFÉ, A.

1985. Isaiah 66,1-4: Judean sects in the Persian Period as viewed by Trito-Isaiah. In: A. Kort & S. Morschauer (eds), *Biblical and related studies presented to Samuel Iwry* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns), pp. 205-217.

RÖMER, T.

2005. *The so-called Deuteronomistic history: A sociological, historical and literary introduction*. London: T & T Clark International.

RUSZKOWSKI, L.

2000. *Volk und gemeinde im Wandel: Eine untersuchung zu Jesaja 56-66. Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments 191.* Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

SAAYMAN, W.

2011. Being human together in democratic South Africa: *Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu.* *Journal of Gender and Religion in Africa* 17(1):170-188.

SCHWARTZ, B.J.

1996. "Profane" slaughter and the integrity of the Priestly Code. *Hebrew Union College Annual* 67:15-42.

SMITH, P.A.

1995. Rhetoric and redaction in Trito-Isaiah: The structure, growth and authorship of Isaiah 56-66. *Vetus Testamentum Supplement* 62. Leiden: Brill.

SMITH-CHRISTOPHER, D.L.

1994. The mixed marriage crisis in Ezra 9-10 and Nehemiah 13: A study of the sociology of post-exilic Judean community. In: T.C. Eskenazi & K.H. Richards (eds.), *Second Temple studies: 2. Temple community in the Persian Period.* (*Journal for the Study of Old Testament: Supplement* 175. Sheffield: JSOT Press), pp. 243-265.

STATISTICS SOUTH AFRICA (STATS SA)

2012. *Social profile of vulnerable groups in South Africa 2002-2011.* Pretoria: Statistics South Africa.

TSE-TUNG, M.

2007. US imperialism is a paper tiger. In: S. Žižek (ed.), *On practice and contradiction: Slavoj Žižek presents Mao Tse-Tung* (London: Verso), pp. 108-111.

TSHAKA, R.S.

2014. On being African and reformed? Towards an African reformed theology enthused by an interlocution of those on the margins of society. *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 70(1):1-7.

VELLEM, V.

2012. Interlocution and Black theology of liberation in the 21st century: A reflection. *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 38(Suppl 1):345-360.

2016. Epistemological dialogue as prophetic: A Black theological perspective on the land issue. *Scriptura* 115(1):1-11.

VENTER, P.M.

2012. Trito-Isaiah, penitential prayer and apocalypticism. *Verbum et Ecclesia* 33(1):1-12.

WEST, C.

1981. The North American blacks. In: S. Torres & J. Eagleson (eds), *The challenge of basic Christian communities: Papers from the International Ecumenical Congress of Theology, February 20-22 March, 1980. São Paulo, Brazil* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis), pp. 255-257.

WEST, G.

2011. Tracking an ancient Near Eastern economic system: The tributary mode of production and the Temple-State. *Old Testament Essays* 24(2):511-532.

WIESEHÖFER, J.

2009. The Achaemenid empire. In: I. Morris & W. Scheidel (eds), *The dynamics of ancient empires* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 66-98.

WILLI, T.

1995. *Juda-Jehud-Israël: Studien zum Selbstverständnis des Judentums in persischer Zeit. Forschungen zum Alten Testament 12*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

WOODS, D.

1978. *Biko*. New York: Random House.

ZENGER, E.

1997. *Erich. Die Nacht wird leuchten wie der Tag: Psalmenauslegungen*. Freiburg: Herder.

*Keywords**Trefwoorde*

Trito-Isaiah

Trito-Jesaja

Postexilic Yehud

Post-eksiliese Jehud

Itumeleng J. Mosala

Itumeleng J. Mosala

African liberationist approach

Afrika bevrydingsbenadering

Poverty

Armmoede