

*Midwives and Moral
Reasoning, Love and Law:*

A GENDERED READING OF
THE BOOK OF EXODUS

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*Upon the merit of righteous women
Israel was redeemed from Egypt
Sotah 11b*

The Talmud in Sotah 11b gives particular weight to the role of women in the story of the Exodus, “Rav Avira expounded that in the merit of righteous women in that generation were they redeemed from Egypt.” Halachic literature teaches that the prominence of women in the Exodus forces an exception to the general rule that women are exempt from time generated commandments. Furthermore, an observant reader will notice striking gender issues within the first chapters of Exodus. As Pharaoh oppresses the Jews, one might look for a classical heroic figure that would stand up to the paranoid tyrant. However, when looking at these chapters it is only the Hebrew midwives, Miriam,

and the Daughter of Pharaoh, who openly defy the decrees of the Egyptian king. Furthermore, even after a revelation is presented to Moshe at the bush, it is Tzipporah who saves him from the fate that should await a father who neglects the circumcision of his own son. One might argue that Moshe, and not any of these women, is the central male figure that rises as the savior or hero in this book. However, we should note that Moshe himself is raised in sequence by two women, without the hint of a male role model in the verses of the Torah. Furthermore, female actors in the books of Tanach are rare indeed, to see so many of them in such close proximity indicates that a new dynamic is at play.¹

On the Midrashic level it is interesting to see the question of resistance debated with Aaron and Yocheved². In the end, the one person who rises in defiance of the word of Pharaoh is Miriam. Again the one that defies the rules is female. These facts provide inspiration for a gender oriented reading of this book of the Bible³. We will look to see if we can find a new heroic, one that might bear particularly feminine characteristics and that will describe both the actions of the male heroes and inform the nature of the law that is presented.

In A Different Voice

To properly understand this gender orientation it would be wise to draw from classic research on gender psychology. Carol Gilligan, in her book *In A Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* amalgamates her own research and that of others to present a comprehensive understanding of the differences in moral reasoning between genders. Her observations afford critical information and powerful methodologies in unlocking the meaning in the book of Exodus.

Based on responses to what is called Heinz dilemma, where children are given the following scenario, "a man named Heinz considers whether or not to steal a drug which he cannot afford to buy in order to save the life of his wife." Child subjects are asked not only what they would do, but also to articulate the reasoning that brought them to their conclusion. Gilligan concluded that boys mediated disputes based on rules and law, "they began to transpose a hierarchy of power into a hierarch of values, in this way he abstracts the moral from the interpersonal." On the other hand girls mediate the "Heinz dilemma

with a network of connection, a web of relationships that is sustained by a process of communication”⁴. Thus as we probe the book of Shemot, actions that are motivated by rules and the abstraction of values into a set of protocols represent male action. On the other hand, decisions and actions which are motivated and animated by preservation or development of a relationship would thus represent the feminine modality.

Furthermore, Gilligan made the following observation while executing a TAT (Thematic Apperception Test)⁵ analysis. Simple pictures, such as a man and a woman sitting on a park bench, two trapeze artists or a woman behind a desk in the background and a woman in a lab coat in the foreground were presented to individuals in the study who were then asked to compose a story based on the picture. Roughly 20% of the stories written by the men contained violent elements such as murder, stabbing, rape, or kidnapping, a smaller percentage of the women’s stories contained violence of that nature. It was observed that as the individuals in a picture were more physically proximate, or could be perceived to be more intimate, there was an increased incidence of violence in male stories. Conversely, there was an increased incidence of violence in females stories when the individuals were less physically proximate (with the single highest percentage of violent stories written by women in response to an image in which an individual was sitting alone). Making the assumption that the projection of violence into a story is a reflection of a fear and anxiety, Gilligan drew the conclusion that men project violence and perceive fear in situations that suggest intimacy, and that women do so in situations of isolation and competitive success.⁶

With Gilligan’s findings in mind, we can investigate anew the exploration of the text of the book of Shemot. As we look not only for heroic action, but also a model for heroics within the context of the formation of *Am Yisrael*, the Israelite nation, we are well prepared to see if the Torah is embracing a masculine or feminine modality.

Heroics in Exodus

The first act of heroics is of course the refusal of the midwives to follow the instructions of Pharaoh (Exod. 1:17), “But the midwives feared God, and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men-children alive.”⁷ The midwives here are motivated by a fear

of God. Or differently described, it is their relationship with God that motivates them to defy the rules that the King of Egypt has devised for the long term preservation of his nation. They are not described as rejecting Pharaoh's wisdom because a different set of logical rules bring them to an alternate conclusion – even though such a thought process might have taken place, or might even be implied by the fear of God. It is the relationship with God that motivates defiance rather than a more logical analysis of the inequity or the ethical problems.⁸

We notice also that outside of the moments of marriage and conception Moshe's father does not present in the text of the narrative. It is his mother who realizes what needs to be done, his sister who watches from afar and then his mother who will return as midwife.

Interestingly, next to violate the laws of the Pharaoh is none other than his own daughter. As baby Moshe famously sits in his basket among the reeds in the Nile, it is daughter or Pharaoh who comes to greet him.

5 And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe in the river; and her maidens walked along by the river-side; and she saw the ark among the flags, and sent her handmaid to fetch it.

6 And she opened it, and saw it, even the child; and behold a boy that wept. And she had compassion on him, and said: 'This is one of the Hebrews' children.'

Again we see a defiance of the rules of Pharaoh; the picture is quite startling as the Daughter of Pharaoh descends from the steps of the great house of the Egyptian king⁹ to rescue this child – figuratively presenting us with a heroine leaving the structure of the laws of Egypt and motivated by a sense of connection and potential relationship with this child. It must be emphasized that her defiance is not motivated by the logical analysis that her father's rules are unjust she therefore engages herself in an act of calculated protest. Rather she is motivated by a sense of human connection with a particular child.¹⁰

The next moment of defiance is taken up by Moshe, who is without question male. Nevertheless, Moshe is raised by two women, his natural mother and the daughter of Pharaoh. Furthermore, the

motivations for Moshe's act of defiance resembles more the sense of connection that Carol Gilligan finds characteristic of women, than the logical abstractions characteristic of men. As we see in the following (Exod. 2:11–12)

11 And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown up, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens; and he saw an Egyptian smiting a Hebrew, one of his brethren.

12 And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he smote the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand.

While this is no doubt an act of defiance, there is not really a sense that Moshe analyzed the inequity and therefore took defiant action. Rather, we are given the impression that Moshe established a connection with his brothers, he actually identified with their pain and stood to defend them out of that connection. Notice how the verse (11) emphasizes at the end that the victim was his brother, when this information is already assumed from the fact that the victim was a Hebrew. Similarly, Moshe does not see their suffering, but sees *in* their suffering – a point which nearly all commentators understand to communicate a heightened awareness of their true inner suffering.¹¹ This is a pivotal moment for Moshe as well, for he is clearly rejecting one social network, that of the “great house” of Pharaoh, for the social network of his Hebrew Brothers.¹² However, as we noted before the only persons to defy Pharaoh are the midwives and this young man Moshe who has been raised by two women. Thus a new kind of heroics emerges from these chapters in which *Am Yisrael*, the Israelite nation, begins to form. The Heroics are not those of men brandishing swords, or of great statesmen arguing for equality, but rather those who are inspired by their relationship with God, or with an infant or with their brothers to defy the evil decrees.

The Law of Relationship

The theme of relationships returns to a prominent place as the core of Torah law is revealed. The first statements of God atop Mount Sinai

to his people define the nature of the law. One might expect the great principles of the Torah to serve as the first statement or prelude to the finer points. From an *a priori* point of view I would expect the statements of Rebbe Akiva or Ben Azzai That which is displeasureable for you do not do to your fellow, or this is the work of the *Toldot Ha'adam*, man was created in the image of God. However, the Torah does not open with a logically reasoned position of law, there are no truths that we hold self evident, no abstracted guiding philosophy, but rather the declaration of a relationship which marks the opening of the Ten Commandments. "I am the Lord your God who has taken you out of Egypt." Again the heroics, the pinnacle of achievement in the epic of liberation and revelation, is the establishment of a relationship. God chooses to open the revelation of the law with an exposition of the basis of God's relationship with his people. In Gilligan's analysis, it is characteristic of women's thinking to be motivated by relationships and the preservation thereof. The opening of the Ten Commandments and, in truth the next three commandments, emphasize of relationship creation and preservation with Hashem.¹³

Additionally should note the very language in which this law is presented. One of the most perplexing and challenging statements in the Ten Commandments is (Exod. 20:5) "Thou shalt not bow down unto them, nor serve them; for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me;" The very description of God, the law giver and judge, as jealous is jarring and inconsistent with our assumptions about a dispassionate and logically based law system. However, as Hirsch¹⁴ and others note, the use of the word jealous here is a type of anthropathism that communicates to the Jew the special and exclusive nature of his or her relationship to God. This is a word that accentuates relationship as no other word could. Jealousy is the lover's emotion; it is the emotion that speaks of betrayal, of a violent violation of the central component of the relationship. Surely, this descriptive language further highlights that this law operates in the feminine modality of relationship as opposed to the masculine or logical.

There are also those who have argued that it is these very anthropathisms, as well as the prominent descriptions of God as *raham*,

merciful, hanun indicate an “ethic of care’ and a jurisprudence of ‘compassion,’ or even ‘maternal thinking’”. The effect is certainly clear obedience to the law is born of the special relation; and the product of applying the law reflects the special relationship¹⁵. Both obedience and application reflect modalities that are distinctly feminine when we compare them to Giligan’s conclusions.

Isolation and Intimacy

We noted that research reflected a difference in the perception of trauma between men and women, with men perceiving trauma at intimacy and women perceiving trauma at separation and competitive isolation. Comparison of the heroics in Exodus to Classical and Mesopotamian epics provides greater contrast and resolution to the feminine Take for example Homer’s *Odyssey* where a traumatic hurdle for the returning Odysseus is to escape from the forced intimacy of Kalypso who holds him a captive guest on her Island. Contrast the Odysseus, “sitting on the beach, crying, as before now he had done, breaking his heart in tears, lamentation and sorrow as weeping tears he looked out over the barren water,” with the will of Kalypso “So now you gods, resent it in me that I keep beside me a man, the one I saved when he clung astride of the keel board all alone...” The hero in tears for the goddess holds him alone on her island.¹⁶ Even the Sirens of the same work threaten to drive mad the sailors who are afflicted with the intimacy of the sirens voices. Similarly in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* we find the hero Gilgamesh unfazed when confronting the monstrous guardian of the cedar forest, Humamba, in mortal combat. However, when the goddess Ishtar proposes marriage, Gilgamesh assumes that such a relationship would be, “a palace that massacres warriors... a shoe that bites the foot of its owner... what bridegroom of yours ever endured forever?”¹⁷ There is little doubt that the intimacy of marriage with the goddess represents an intense trauma. By contrast we will see that in the book of *Shemot* it is not intimacy, but rather separation, isolation and abandonment that generate the true trauma.

In *Sefer Shemot* there is one circumstance of violence that emerges from perceived intimacy. It is Pharaoh himself who perceives the threat posed by the Jew as a result of their closeness. (Exod. 1:7–10)

7 And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them. {P}

8 Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who knew not Joseph. 9 And he said unto his people: 'Behold, the people of the children of Israel are too many and too mighty for us; 10 come, let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there befalleth us any war, they also join themselves unto our enemies, and fight against us, and get them up out of the land.'

It is specifically, Pharaoh's fear of a betrayal from within, from a group filling his quarters that motivates his violent action against the Children of Israel. The threat of the intimate fifth column presents only a *theoretical* threat in the distant future, yet the most extreme measure is taken against them.

Pharaoh's fear of intimacy is to be contrasted with the opposite in terms of the most significant trauma in the book of Shemot, the Golden Calf. Though, we are aware of the affliction at the hands of the Egyptians, our belief in God relieves us of panic when the Jews suffer under Pharaoh, or are trapped between his army and the sea. However, the true potential risk in this book is that the act of betrayal and violation – the worship of the Calf – will dissolve their relationship with God and bring about another flood like reduction of the people and a repopulation of the nation through Moshe. The narrative of the Calf story opens with the words (Exod. 32:1)

1 And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him: 'Up, make us a god who shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we know not what is become of him.'

It is precisely the fear of isolation that triggers the event of the Golden Calf. It is the fear that the man who connected them to God, perhaps even a man confused by the people for God himself, has left the people

isolated and adrift, without connection. However, it is the aftermath of the sin that presents the true trauma – that God can no longer dwell among the Jewish people. (Exod. 33:1–11)

1 And the LORD spoke unto Moses: ‘Depart, go up hence, thou and the people that thou hast brought up out of the land of Egypt, unto the land of which I swore unto Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying: Unto thy seed will I give it – 3 unto a land flowing with milk and honey; for I will not go up in the midst of thee; for thou art a stiff-necked people; lest I consume thee in the way.’ 4 And when the people heard these evil tidings, they mourned; and no man did put on him his ornaments. 5 And the LORD said unto Moses: ‘Say unto the children of Israel: Ye are a stiff-necked people; if I go up into the midst of thee for one moment, I shall consume thee; therefore now put off thy ornaments from thee, that I may know what to do unto thee.’ 6 And the children of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments from mount Horeb onward. 7 Now Moses used to take the tent and to pitch it without the camp, afar off from the camp; and he called it The tent of meeting. And it came to pass, that every one that sought the LORD went out unto the tent of meeting, which was without the camp.... 9 And it came to pass, when Moses entered into the Tent, the pillar of cloud descended, and stood at the door of the Tent; and [the LORD] spoke with Moses.... 11 And the LORD spoke unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend. And he would return into the camp; but his minister Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the Tent. {P}

The key point of this entire passage is that the intimacy between God and the Jewish people is now impossible, and untenable. The relationship has now been violated to force the worst of all possibilities – isolation from God’s presence, the *Shechina*. The passage is virtually overflowing with separation and isolation. From God not being able to dwell among them to the removal of the tent of meeting, distance is the theme of the day, the consequence of sin to

the point where it almost destroys the relationship altogether. Further, the comparative intimacy with Moshe draws a painful contrast to the lonely position of the *Bnai Yisrael*.¹⁸ It is here that the Torah tells us that God spoke to Moshe as a man speaks to a friend, and it is only six verses later that Moshe feels close enough to ask God, show me your glory.¹⁹

Further proof that God's exodus from the camp of the Jews is the dramatic – though negative--climax of *Exodus*, is that *Shemot* closes with the resolution of the tension created by God's departure (*Shemot* 40:33–38).

33 And he reared up the court round about the tabernacle and the altar, and set up the screen of the gate of the court. So Moses finished the work. {P}

34 Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

35 And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of meeting, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. – **36** And whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the children of Israel went onward, throughout all their journeys. **37** But if the cloud was not taken up, then they journeyed not till the day that it was taken up. **38** For the cloud of the LORD was upon the tabernacle by day, and there was fire therein by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys.— {P}

The completion of the Tabernacle triggers God's return. Thus, the last verses proclaim not only the return of the Divine presence, "Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle", but also the enduring intimacy of God within the camp of the Jews throughout their journeys, "For the cloud of the LORD was upon the tabernacle by day, and there was fire therein by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys."²⁰ I suggest that this closing act of return in *Sefer Shemot*, strongly reinforces the centrality of intimacy as a theme within this book.²¹

Interconnection over Hierarchy

There is one other strong difference between the moral reasoning of men and that of women that is emphasized by Carol Gilligan

The reinterpretation of women's experience in terms of their own imagery or relationships thus clarifies that experience and also provides a nonhierarchical vision of human connection. Since relationships, when cast in the image of hierarchy, appear inherently unstable and morally problematic, their transposition into the image of web changes an order of inequality into a structure of interconnection... the ideals of human relationship – the vision that self and other will be treated as of equal worth, that despite differences in power, things will be fair, the vision that every one will be responded to and included, that no one will be left alone or hurt...²²

More than anything Gilligan's conclusion is that for women the concept of interconnection triumphs over hierarchy and the logical outgrowth of the web of relationship is a structure of equality. Strikingly, the social structure introduced by the Torah over the Children of Israel embraces both equality and interconnection in sharp contrast to the social and authoritative hierarchy that is so characteristic of Egypt. There are many verses that communicate this concept such as the Ten Commandments: "You should not do any manner of work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates"²³. On the day of rest the Torah establishes complete parity between servant and master. Further examples include the Jews being described as a nation of priests²⁴, the wealthy shall not add nor the poor subtract from the half Shekel²⁵. Even the concept of the release of the indentured Israelite in the seventh year is an expression of this social ideal.²⁶

Conclusion

The research of Gilligan establishes that isolation is the fear, even a fear that triggers violent imagination in women. I suggest that the book of Shemot is teaching us a new heroism. It is not the heroism of the

clever warrior statesman; it is not at all similar to the heroic Odysseus brandishing his sword. Rather, it is a different, feminine heroism, one in which relationship is valued over strength and in which connection is prized over logical abstraction. In the book of the Bible that tells the story of the birth of the Nation of Israel, the emergence of the Feminine heroic is both striking and instructive. It sets the field for the character of this people that will forever strive to maintain equality between themselves²⁷ and develop a network among themselves. But the feminine Heroic strives beyond human relationships to set the greatest prize as maintaining a close, intimate relationship with the Divine. The relationship with God is the rock upon which all of Torah morality is based; it is to be guarded beyond all else, its rupture being the greatest trauma.

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NOTES

1. For further discussion of Female actors in Biblical literature see Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Sheffield: The Almond Press: 1993) 23–43.
2. Pesikta Rabati 47.
3. A very simple example of this concept is the distinction between the names of God, *Shem Havaya* (Tetragrammaton) and *Elohim*. The later is reflective of strict justice as in the Deut. 1:17, “Ye shall not respect persons in judgment; ye shall hear the small and the great alike; ye shall not be afraid of the face of any man; for the judgment is God’s (Elohim); and the cause that is too hard for you ye shall bring unto me, and I will hear it.’ On the other hand the Shem Havayah, (Tetragrammaton) often a contrasting modality, is understood to represent *Midat Harachamim*, or the attribute of mercy. The clearest connection between the Tetragrammaton (which in the following translation is “LORD”) and the attribute of mercy is from Shemot 34:6: “And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed: ‘The LORD, the LORD, God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; The connection between the word *rachum*, mercy, and the word *rechem*, womb, and thus a more feminine perspective cannot be mistaken. Thus from a simple cursory analysis we can see that gender oriented descriptions have early place in Jewish Biblical analysis.

4. Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*, (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1982) 25–31.
5. The Thematic Apperception Test is a standard psychological tool, similar to the Rorschach test. It differs from the Rorschach in that it uses actual pictures in place of ink splotches. Both tests are projective tests in they ask the subject to project information from the original image.
6. Gilligan, p. 39–42.
7. The Holy Scriptures, according to the Masoretic Text: A New Translation, (Philadelphia Jewish Publication Society of America, 1917), on line edition. All translations of the Bible are taken from the online edition of this source <http://www.mechon-mamre.org>.
8. The Talmud in *Sotah* 11a points out that not only did the midwives defy Pharaoh, but the language implies that they caused the children to live. Coupled with Rashi's comment illuminating Shifra as one who would heal the women and Puah as one who would whisper in the ears of the children, the heroics of the this chapter speak to the connection of souls and the formation of relationships as opposed to the brandishing of swords and disobedience to the laws of an nefarious king.
9. Nachmonides, Commentary on the Torah.
10. Nachmonides does present one reading in which the daughter of Pharaoh is attracted to the child purely for aesthetic reasons which would not support this thesis, however Nachmonides, Rashi and others seem to favor other interpretations.
11. The Targum Yonatan, translates *vayar* *bsivlotam* as, "and Moshe saw into the suffering of their souls and into the magnitude of their labor," thus Moshe saw beyond their external condition and into the suffering of their souls.
12. The text tells us Moshe "turned this way and that and saw "*ki ein ish*", that there was no *man*. From a gender perspective it is tempting to look at such a phrase to be super-literal, meaning that there are no men. Of course as Hebrew has no neuter case it would be inaccurate to make such a statement. However, a similar interpretation is advanced by the Netziv who claims that there was no man present to stand up for this poor Hebrew slave. In terms relevant to our argument, we can say that there were none who would uphold the principles of moral logic and defend the Hebrew slave. Were there heroes willing to defy Pharaoh and defend the rights of the downtrodden, there would be an *ish*, a man.
13. This conclusion (irrespective of the modern methodology) is resonant with strong themes of Biblical and Rabbinic literature. Other texts that

articulate this point are the Binding of Issac, where allegiance to God in the relationship overrides the obvious moral objection. Less dramatically, Rashi Berachot 33b.

His attributes – He did not make them to inspire mercy, rather to place upon Israel the particulars of his laws, to inform them that they are His servants and the followers of his commandments, edicts and statutes, even those concepts that the Satan and the stranger may logically argue against to say for what purpose is this. Rashi's understanding is then that we follow the laws out of our sense of relationship with the Divine, and not out of a logical deduction. Furthermore, the story of the binding of Isaac is often interpreted along these lines. The story demonstrates faith over logic. Avraham trusts God, therefore he ignores the natural and logical impulse to reject the instructions. It is the patriarch's relationship with God that trumps his own sense of right and wrong.

14. Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Commentary on the Torah, Exodus*, Isaac Levy Trans. (London, The Judaica Press, 1966) 262.
15. Stone, Suzanne Last, "Justice Mercy and Gender in Rabbinic Thought" *Cordozo Studies in Law and Literature*, Vol 8, No. 1, A Commemorative Volume for Robert M. Cover (Spring-Summer, 1996) 139–177.
16. *The Odyssey*, Owen Lattimore trans. (New York, harper And Row, 1967) 90, 91.
17. *Epic of Gilgamesh*. Andrew George, trans. (London, Peguin Books, 1999) 49.
18. There is one reading which presets what one might call the poster image of the feminine heroic. The reading, presented by the Chassidic master Rabbi Aryeh Leib of Gur, is perhaps outside a close literal reading; however his reading is very much in line with the overall dynamic of the narrative.

The Shemot Rabba 43 as well as Sefat Emet Shemot, Ki Tisah 5741 present the breaking of the tablets as an overt act by Moshe to avoid being separated from the Jewish people which was also in accord with the divine will. The literal breaking of the tablets of the law to maintain a relationship would seem to be the very image of the feminine Heroic.

19. Moreover, according to the Talmud in Berachot, Moshe is granted a personal perspective heretofore and since granted to no other, to see the knot of God's Tefilin I think it should also be noted that in addition to the intimacy of the 'gaze', there is an intimacy of symbol. The Tefilin themselves are more than a random icon, they are a symbol of love and connection. Maimonides places Tefilin in *Sefer Ahavah* (the Book of

- Love) and the Talmud in *Berachot* also relates that God's Tefilin contain scrolls that articulate his love and connection to the Jewish people.
20. This theme of reconciliation is communicated very strongly in linguistic terms as the presence of *Kvod Hashem* and the cloud of glory that descends upon Sinai upon revelation and forgiveness are also mentioned here in exactly the same linguistic terms, where the word *Kavod* joined with the Tetragramaton is said to refer to God's presence. In this language there is a further link between the intimacy of Sinai and the reconciliation of the conclusion of *Shemot* see Shawn Zelig Aster, "The Phenomenon of Divine and Human Radiance in the Hebrew Bible and in Mesopotamian and Northwest Semitic Literature: A Philological and Comparative Analysis" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania 2006).
 21. The theme of intimacy and estrangement in the human God relationship, though best established in the book of *Shemot*, finds resonance throughout Biblical and Rabbinic literature. Two examples of the many are Nachmonides commentary to Genesis 1:1, the *Kina* of *Tisha b'Av Eicha Atzat apecha*, and an article on this subject "Yearning for Closeness to *Ha-Kadosh Baruch-Hu*" published in *The Lord is Righteous in all His Ways: Reflections on the Tisha b'Av Kinot*, Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik Ed. Jacob J. Shachter (Newark Ketav Publishing, 2006).
 22. Gilligan, p62–63.
 23. Similar language is used in *Shemot* 23:12 and the conclusion that this equality is explicitly the result of the exodus from Egypt is articulated in the recount of the Ten Commandments in *Devarim* 5:13–15.
 24. *Shemot* 19:6.
 25. *Shemot* 30:15.
 26. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, noticing the recurrence of animals in such verses goes even further including all God's creation under the umbrella equality.
 27. Note as well the comment of Gershom Scholem indicating that Jews have never developed distinct social classes Scholem, Gershom *Sabbatai Sevi, The Mystical Messiah 1626–1676*, (Rutledge and Kegan Paul. London, 1973) 6.