

**Journal of Korean American
Ministries & Theology**

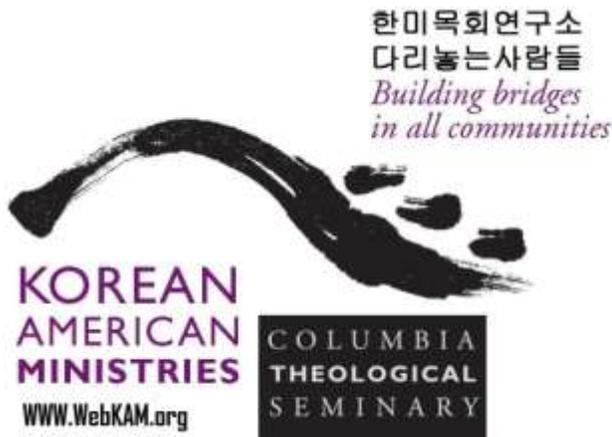
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13:1). Even slavery had been justified by the scripture in American society, while slaves found hope of liberation also from the scripture. Then, a question arises. What is the norm for such judgment? That is the justice of God protecting human dignity and observing the law of God: “What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8)

Second, reading of the Bible cannot be limited to understanding but should be extended to acting out like our fathers in the March First Independence Movement. The problem of contemporary Christians lies in their spiritualization of the message of the Bible. When they read the story of Exodus and see God fighting for “my people”, they simply think that it is God’s fight with Satan to save them from the bondage of sin. However, as the Israelites remembered the event of Exodus as a historical reality and constantly reiterated it throughout the Bible, Christians need to accept the event of Exodus as a historical reality which God intervened in human life to bring justice. Since our forefathers knew this, they participated in March First Independence Movement risking their lives. They knew it is costly but did it anyway, because that is what the God of justice desires. In this sense, spiritualization of the biblical messages can be making an excuse to avoid paying the cost. Biblical interpreters, therefore, are responsible to bring the message of the Bible alive so that its readers may act upon it in their real life by bringing justice despite its cost. Otherwise, now is time for Korean Christians living in Egyptian Captivity that the word of God loses its liberating power.

Kim, Uriah Yong-Hwan. “The Realpolitik of Liminality in Josiah’s Kingdom and Asian America.” Mary F. Foskett, ed. *Ways of Being, Ways of Reading: Asian American Biblical Interpretation*. St. Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press, 2006.

In this article, Kim’s premise is that interpreting Josiah’s reform in 2 Kings 22-23 from nationalistic perspective is West’s anachronistic approach imposing European nationalism, which appeared in modernity, to Ancient Near East context. “Josiah’s kingdom was a typical state in agrarian society maintained through religion and dynasty.” The fidelity of the people was toward Yahweh and the Davidic kingship and not toward the modern notion of *nation*. But, Western biblical scholars have understood David’s

kingdom and later Josiah's kingdom as a nation-state of homogeneous Israelites having the permanent right to possess the land of Palestine. This view of history creates "us and them" mentality as it appears in nationalism and Orientalism. However, in reality, such a distinction does not exist, because the boundary dividing those two identities is a space of liminality where different people and culture are accepted into one. However, not acknowledging the liminality of American society, Asian Americans are considered as "a problematic object that needs to be managed and controlled" by the nationalistic view of the descendants of white Europeans. In the *realpolitik* of liminality, neither being black nor white, Asian Americans became victims of violation and exploitation, as in Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, incarceration of Japanese Americans during Roosevelt legislation of World War 2, and the Los Angeles riots in which the LAPD protected only white LA. In other words, Asian Americans are still regarded as the *Other* in American society. However, recently Asian American historians began to write their own history in the United States refusing to be a mere footnote in national American history. According to Kim, Josiah's kingdom was also in the space of liminality between Egypt-Assyria alliance and Babylonia-Medea alliance. In this *realpolitik* of liminality, on the one hand, Amon, the Father of Josiah, is assassinated by pro-Judeans, because he maintained the *status quo* by being pro-Assyrian. On the other hand, later Josiah died, because he disturbed the *status quo* by not being pro-Assyrian and standing against Necho 2nd of Egypt. In other words, Josiah was a victim of *realpolitik* of liminality. Kim argues that in this historical circumstances, Deuteronomic historians wrote their own history not being swayed by the imperial powers of Josiah's time. They knew that they are subjects of history, not objects, and Yahweh is the divine agent controlling their history. In doing so, they were promoting their unique identity as God's people.

Reflection: As much as biblical interpretation has positive impacts to benefit people's lives by giving spiritual and moral guidance, it also has a danger of being misused to propagate one's or a group's agenda, which we have seen in the nationalistic view on Josiah's reform in Kim's article. Lacking in understanding the context of biblical stories, its readers can be easily swayed by authoritative interpreters of the Bible. It creates a great danger of interpretation, because readers often take this kind of interpretation

without critical approach, since it is God's word, and as a result biased views of the Bible, such as nationalistic view toward Josiah's reform, can be used to seek self interest of certain groups, as Jews justify their oppression of Palestinians.

There are two points worth pointing out in Kim's essay. First, Biblical interpretation has great impact in people's view on the world, culture, and other ethnic groups. The fact that the Bible is accepted as a religious writing means that it will determine the reader's world view. The word of the Bible will dictate their value system. Its interpretation is a critical enterprise. That is why interpreters of the Bible have to find contexts of biblical stories so that they may deliver the original message that the author tried to convey. Therefore, interpreters of the Bible should have greater responsibility to interpret the Bible as scripture through which God is revealed Himself and know that there lies greater condemnation when they misinterpret it for their own benefit.

Second, we Koreans should also have a sense of liminality acknowledging that we do not need to do what dominant ethnic groups do to join in their group, which we think is the mainstream of American society. The mainstream of American society, which we think real, is not even real, because that place is also a place of liminality where different ethnic groups, cultures, and voices are mixed. Therefore, the calling for Korean-Americans in American society is first to be who we are and allow God to do God's work in history in our time in our society through us. When this takes place, Korean Americans will be no more objects of history or *Other* but subjects of God's history in America.

Kim, Jean Kyoung. "Empowerment or Enslavement?: Reading John 4 Intertextually with Ezra-Nehemiah." Mary F. Foskett, ed. *Ways of Being, Ways of Reading: Asian American Biblical Interpretation*. St. Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press, 2006.

What triggered Jean K. Kim's reading of Samaritan woman's story is her experience attending a Korean American church having many military brides in it. Though she was welcomed by them at first, because she was married to an American, she was alienated by them, because her husband is not a soldier and her social status is higher than those women. They are victims of colonization of Korea in the 20th century under Japanese imperialism and later American imperialism, as the Samaritan woman in John 4 is a