

## **The Exodus and the Demand for Liberation**

**First presentation in a series on Liberation Theology** by Bruce Chilton  
for the Rhinebeck Reformed Church:

Beginning in South and Central America after the Second Vatican Council, Liberation became a major movement within theology, contributing to efforts of national and class revolution in several parts of the world. Despite enduring systematic attempts to silence them, liberation theologians have persisted, and their approach has been embraced on an interfaith basis. This series will engage both the thought and the practice of Liberation Theology.

### **Leonardo Boff, speaking in 2001 at the Right Livelihood Foundation:**

What is the cause that moves a whole generation of Christians in the Third World, in which I find myself as a Brazilian theologian, on the periphery of the big metropolitan centers of reflection, for more than 30 years? It is the cause of the condemned of the Earth, who account for most of mankind.

At the end of the sixties, an entire generation of Christians and theologians wondered and still wonder: how can we announce the love and mercy of God to millions who starve and are condemned to be non-humans?

Only announcing a vivid and liberating God, allied with the poor and the excluded, can we, without cynicism and in truth, say: He is effectively a good and merciful God. The words of the Exodus were updated for our generation: "I have heard the oppression of my people, I have heard their screams of affliction, I have known their suffering. I have come down to free them...Now go, for I send you to free my people" (Exodus 3:7-10). Those words were addressed to each one of us, to each church, to each conscience which is minimally ethical and humanitarian.

**Exodus 3:9: "I have seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them."**

### **Remembrance of Slavery —**

Exodus 1:22:

Then Pharaoh commanded to all his people, "Every son that is born you shall throw into the Nile, and every daughter you shall keep alive."

Exodus 13:3:

And Moses said to the people, “Remember this day, when you came out of Egypt, out of the place of bondage, because with strength of hand Yahweh brought you out from this.”

Deuteronomy 5:15

“And you shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and Yahweh your God brought you out with a strong hand and an outstretched arm.”

Zechariah 7:9

Yahweh of angelic armies says this, “Judge true judgment, show mercy and compassion one to another, and do not oppress widow or orphan, the stranger or the poor, and do not devise evil in your heat, one against another.”

Leviticus 19:18

“You shall not take vengeance or remain hostile with the children of my people, and you shall love your neighbor as yourself, I am Yahweh.”

### **Entitled Persistence in Oppression —**

Exodus 7:21

And the fish of the Nile died and the Nile stagnated, and the Egyptians could not drink the water from the Nile.

Exodus 9:25

The hail struck all the land of Egypt, all that was in the field from man to beast; the hail hit every plant of the field and broke every tree.

Exodus 11:5

All firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits upon his throne to the firstborn of the maidservant at the mill, and the firstborn of beasts.