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The biblical story of Tamar: training for transformation, doing development

Abstract

The Ujamaa Centre for Community Development and Research in South Africa has been working with the biblical story of the rape of Tamar, who is the daughter of king David, as a resource for engaging communities of faith in the area of gender violence and in the area of masculinity. This essay focuses on the Ujamaa Centre's 'theory of change', reflecting on how our work with this biblical story offers critical capacity for social transformation.

Introduction

What was then the Institute for the Study of the Bible (ISB) and is now the Ujamaa Centre for Community Development and Research (Ujamaa Centre) began doing 'Contextual Bible Study'¹ work on the biblical story of Tamar, the daughter of king David, in 1996.² While king David is a familiar figure in Christian churches and faith-based organisations, his daughter who was raped within his household by his son is less well known. Tamar has been deliberately marginalised in the formal liturgical life of the church, with her story hardly ever being read on a Sunday within church lectionaries.

It is important to note, at the outset, that by working with this biblical text the Ujamaa Centre is not doing missionary work; it is doing the work of social transformation and development. The Ujamaa Centre does its Contextual Bible Study (CBS)³ work within community-based organisations that invite the Ujamaa Centre to work with them as they struggle to use their faith resources – like the Bible – for the transformation of their communities.

In the case of this particular CBS on the story of Tamar, it was a cross-sector of rural and urban African women who asked the Ujamaa Centre to work with them on the pressing issue of gender violence. The work that was done together then has generated a series of CBS on what has become known as the Tamar Campaign, focussing on gender violence, and a series of CBS focussing on men, what has become known as a Redemptive Masculinities series.⁴

Since 1996 the Tamar CBS has been taken up all around the world, particularly in contexts where the Bible continues to be a local community-based resource. Major international ecumenical networks like the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the related Ecumenical HIV and AIDS Initiative in Africa (EHAIA), and significant continental African ecumenical organisations like the Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa (FECCLAHA) have adopted the Tamar CBS as part of their own gender programmes. In addition, the Ujamaa Centre has trained trainers from these and many other faith-based organisations, enabling them to use CBS methodology for the construction of their own 'local' CBS resources.⁵ More locally within South Africa the Ujamaa Centre has produced research on the impact of the Tamar CBS for the Foundation for Human Rights.⁶

The Ujamaa Centre has recently embarked on a research project to document how and with

what effects the Tamar CBS and related gender CBS work has been used in various contexts around the world. This is an important element of the Ujamaa Centre's work, rooted as the work is in the praxis cycle of action-reflection-action-reflection Gathering an account of what the CBS work of the Ujamaa Centre has enabled elsewhere in the world will add to the Ujamaa Centre's own understanding of how and why its CBS work has the capacity to facilitate local community-based social transformation.

Central to the CBS work of the Ujamaa Centre is a 'theory of change' that draws deeply on the praxis cycle. From the praxis cycle the Ujamaa Centre has come to understand how and why its CBS work enables local faith-based formations to use the Bible for survival, liberation, and fulness of life – to resist the forces of death and to align with the God of life. This essay elaborates on what we in the Ujamaa Centre have discerned to-date about our theory of change, using the Tamar CBS as an example.

Theory of change

The Ujamaa Centre's theory of change is founded on the foundational tenet of liberation theology: the epistemological privilege of the poor.⁷ The knowledge of the poor is vital to any project of social transformation. Development cannot be done without the presence of the poor themselves. They are the agents of their own development and they have assets. And among these assets is religion.⁸ Faith, and faith-based resources like the Bible, are potential assets which the poor (and other marginalised sectors) can deploy in projects of social transformation.

So in engaging with gender-based violence, it is the presence and participation and knowledge of the habitual victims of gender-based violence – women – that provides the starting point of social transformation. Their epistemology is fundamental to an analysis of gender violence and their epistemology provides the necessary 'logic' for the forms of action that they might choose to take as part of a transformative project.

For these reasons the Ujamaa Centre privileges organised communities of poor and marginalised women in its gender-based work. The use of the term 'organised' is deliberate. The organised poor and marginalised are central to our theory of change. By being 'organised' poor and marginalised sectors have already constructed their own safe and sequestered sites, and have already begun to assemble their own discourse concerning their oppression and marginalisation. They have already forged a vocabulary for talking about their realities, and they are in (partial) control of their own space.

Here the Ujamaa Centre's praxis is informed by the work of James Scott. The organised marginalised have "a shared interest in jointly creating a discourse of dignity, of negation, and of justice". "They have, in addition", Scott continues, "a shared interest in concealing a social site apart from domination where such a hidden transcript can be elaborated in comparative safety".⁹ As Scott indicates, a safe social site enables an articulation. Put differently, the question posed by Gayatri Spivak, of whether or not the subaltern *can* speak,¹⁰ should be recast as a question which takes space seriously. A more appropriate question would be: 'Where can the subaltern speak?' For as Scott so eloquently argues, subordinate classes are less constrained at the level of thought and ideology than they are at the level of political action and struggle "since they can in secluded settings speak with comparative safety".¹¹ Human dignity, even in the most damaged and denigrated subaltern, demands some form of 'speaking'.¹² How the subaltern speaks depends almost entirely on local 'sectoral' control of space.

This is why women's faith-based groups are such important sites for dealing with gender-based violence. These are sites that have already been established by women in the face of patriarchy, with particular faith-based symbols and rituals playing a significant role in securing these sites.¹³ CBS work only takes place in such sites when and if the Ujamaa Centre is invited by those who control particular sites invite us to enter their site and to collaborate with them.

Such sites are already full of resources, full of assets. The constraint on marginalised African women is not their lack of assets, but how some of these assets, like the Bible, have been used by the dominant patriarchal structures and systems that govern their lives. The Bible is interpreted by institutional patriarchy, including the church, as consisting of a singular voice and conveying a singular message. This is where and why the Ujamaa Centre is invited to work with such women's groups. The resources of biblical scholarship enable the Bible to be read as a text with divergent and even contesting voices. We read unfamiliar biblical texts and we re-read familiar biblical texts in unfamiliar ways. The resources of biblical scholarship enable the detail of the Bible to be visible, unconstrained by the dominant theological frameworks of institutional religion (or the naive and uncritical notions of religion prevalent in 'secular' development agencies).

The story of Tamar in 2 Samuel 13:1-22 is a good example. This text has little or no presence in the public life of the church anywhere in the world. Most lectionaries do not include this portion of the Bible in their set readings for a formal Sunday service. In our experience with this biblical text among women we regularly find that they are unaware that this story in the Bible. And though this story is a "text of terror",¹⁴ it has demonstrated a remarkable capacity to evoke the voice of a biblical woman and the kindred voices of contemporary women who share her experience of violence and abuse. As the Ujamaa Centre has often been told: "If this story is in the Bible we will not be silent". Recovering Tamar's voice – a remarkably articulate voice – has provided additional vocabulary – sacred vocabulary – with which contemporary women can tell their own stories and work together to bring about the transformation of the patriarchal systems that both construct and condone gender-based violence.

The very decision to extract this 'part' of the story from the larger story of David and his male dynasty within Samuel and Kings is significant. This 'part' of the story may well have had an independent existence prior to its co-option by the dominant male narrative and its insertion into the story of great male leaders. The story told in 2 Samuel 13 may well be a part of a 'hidden', disguised, narrative told among women. By identifying Tamar's voice as a significant sacred voice we recover a part of the tradition that has struggled to be heard.

James Scott, as already indicated, offers a thick description of how marginalised sectors, like women, construct their own discourse among themselves, describing how the first articulation by a member of the group has the potential to set in motion a "crystallization" whereby the other members of the group recognise "close relatives" of their own experience, connecting them to a "single power grid".¹⁵ Adopting a theoretical stance similar to that of Scott, John Holloway describes how the revolt of the dignity of the marginalised "derives its strength from the uniting of dignities." "Dignity resonates. As it vibrates, it sets off vibrations in other dignities, an unstructured, possibly discordant resonance".¹⁶ Drawing on the work of Jean and John Comaroff, James Cochrane describes the "incipient theology" of marginalised and traumatised sectors as residing in the continuum between the conscious and the

unconscious, “the realm of partial recognition, of inchoate awareness, of ambiguous perception, and, sometimes of creative tension: that liminal space of human experience in which people discern acts and facts but cannot or do not order them into narrative descriptions or even into articulate conceptions of the world”.¹⁷ “Through a long process of self-constitution that depends upon a history of growing consciousness through communicative action”, Cochrane goes on to argue, organised groups like faith-based women’s groups develop “a foregrounded subjectivity”, with the capacity both to speak to one another and to speak to others outside the community.¹⁸ Offering a similar analysis from within trauma theory Philippe Denis argues that safe space that facilitates both “the elaboration of the painful experience and its validation through empathetic listening” enables a narrative of the traumatic experience to take shape.¹⁹ “Perhaps”, continues Denis, “with difficulty and not without tears, they find the words to tell their story”.²⁰ When somebody tells a story within the carefully facilitated processes of CBS “the incoherent succession of events, perceptions and feelings that characterised the original [traumatic] event is reorganised into a coherent narrative”.²¹ In the presence of the organised group a resource they have to offer is that of ‘validation’, for validation “usually happens in a safe environment”, and that when it does, the “[v]alidation of our experience by others allows us to open ourselves to a painful memory, explore it and work through it”.²² Even those most ‘atomised’ and traumatised by gender violence are enabled by safe and sacred space and the resources of CBS to give ‘voice’ to their embodied trauma, and in so doing to contribute to the formation and mobilisation of the group.²³

The dignity of Tamar, present in her gracious and caring attitude to her brother, present in her analysis and articulation of why her brother should not ‘force’ her, present in her refusal to be silenced after she has been raped, invokes and kindles the dignity of contemporary women who have come to connect with her story in the Bible. Tamar’s ‘discourse’, evident in what she says and does, offers additional resources for the articulation of contemporary incipient women’s theologies, which, when corporately constructed within a safe and sacred space, offer resources with which to confront the dominant forces of patriarchal control of the Bible, the church, and society at large.

In terms of our theory of change, the participatory CBS ‘processes’ and ‘products’ (see below) provide an array of additional assets or resources which organised groups of women can combine with the assets they already have and with which they can work for social transformation.

Social change

In the late 1980s the South African biblical scholar Itumeleng Mosala argued that a ‘critical’ reading of the Bible enabled a critical ‘reading’ of context.²⁴ Put negatively, Mosala is concerned that “unstructural understanding of the Bible may simply reinforce and confirm unstructural understanding of the present”.²⁵ CBS is a response to this recognition, offering a critical-structural-systemic pedagogical framework with which to re-read the Bible. The dominant framework within which the Bible is read by the church, civil society, and even development agencies is as a book with a singular voice and a singular message focussed on the singular individual. Biblical scholarship knows a quite different ‘text’. For biblical scholarship the Bible is a historically, geographically, and ideologically diverse text, with any particular text being constituted by redactional layers, each of which has its own distinctive social location and ideology.²⁶

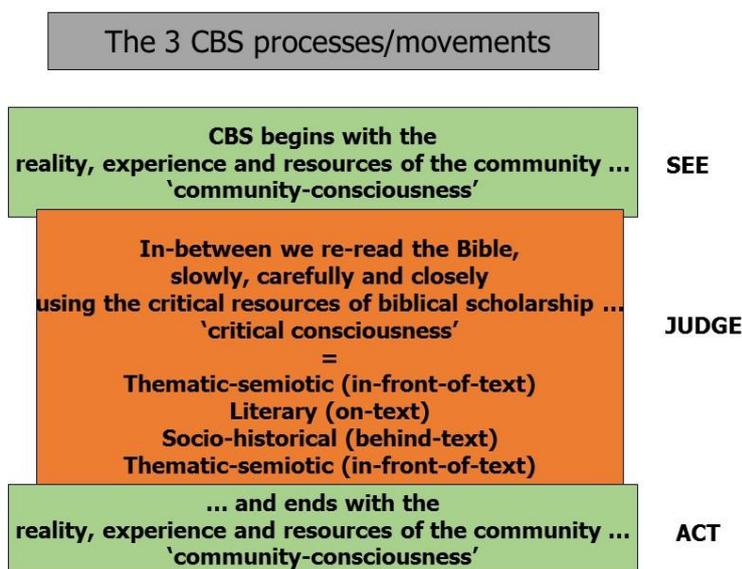
Contextual Bible Study offers such detail to communities of the poor and marginalised, but in

a manner that is pedagogically enabling. There are various ways of describing CBS praxis, but one way of conceptualising our work is to recognise a series of interconnected 'movements' that shape the collaborative interpretive-reading process.

The overarching movement is that of 'See-Judge-Act', a process formed in the worker-priest movement in Europe in the 1930-40s.²⁷ This movement begins within the organised formations of the poor and marginalised as they analyse ('See') their context, 'from below'. This analysis of 'reality' is then brought into dialogue with the 'prophetic' voices of the Bible, enabling 'the God of life' to address ('Judge') the social reality. Through this dialogue with the Bible 'the shape of the gospel'²⁸ is used to plan a series of actions ('Act') that will bring about transformation of the social reality, so that all may have life, and have it abundantly.

Within this overarching movement there is another movement, from 'community-consciousness' to 'critical-consciousness' to 'community-consciousness'. The 'See' moment of social analysis generates a particular contextual concern that becomes the 'theme' for the Bible study. The engagement with the Bible (the Judge component) begins with a community's 'thematic' appropriation of the biblical text being used ('community-consciousness'), allowing every participant to share their particular understanding of the text. This moment not only makes it clear to the participants that the Bible study belongs to them, it also offers a reception history of that text's presence in a particular community. The Bible study then moves into a series of re-readings of the text, slowing down the process of interpretation, using the resources of socially engaged biblical scholarship ('critical-consciousness'). The particular sets of 'critical' tools that are used by biblical scholarship are offered to the participants as additional resources with which to engage the biblical text. After a series of 'critical-consciousness' questions, the Bible study moves back into 'community-consciousness', as the participants appropriate (en-Act) the biblical text for the particular social project identified in the 'See' moment.

With respect to the particular critical resources of biblical scholarship, there is another layer of movement. The movement begins within the 'See' moment with an initial thematic 'in-front-of-the-text' engagement with the text ('community-consciousness'), bringing the generative contextual theme of the community workshop into dialogue with a particular biblical text. The interpretive process then slows down, entering the 'critical-consciousness' moment via a literary engagement with the text. Though a form of 'critical' engagement, the choice to begin critical engagement 'on-the-text' is deliberate because it offers an egalitarian entry point to 'critical-consciousness', enabling all participants to engage with the detail of the text. In most cases, literary engagement leads 'behind-the-text' to a socio-historical engagement with the text, as participants probe the world that produced the text, seeking for lines of connection between both the literary dimensions and the socio-historical dimensions of the text and their contextual realities, seeking lines of connection between contemporary communities of faith and struggle and 'biblical' communities of faith and struggle. While these dimensions of the biblical *text* are the focus of these second and third moments, the process moves in the fourth moment back 'in-front-of-the-text' (into 'community-consciousness'), as the participants now appropriate this critically reconstituted text for their particular project of social transformation ('Act'). Together, as the Tamar CBS examples that follow in the next section illustrate, these concentric and intersecting movements constitute 'the Contextual Bible Study process'.



As already indicated, when it comes to working (critically) with the biblical text, CBS incorporates four 'critical' moments within a coherent movement. The first moment is 'in-front-of-the-text', a direct and unmediated semiotic-thematic encounter between text and reader. The second moment and the third moment introduces or offers (more) critical modes of reading into the CBS process, beginning with literary analysis and then socio-historical analysis. The fourth moment returns to appropriation, but appropriation of a 'different', historically distanced, text. That appropriation does take place demonstrates the presence of what Michel Foucault refers to as a 'heterotopia'. Through distanciation (to use Paul Ricoeur's phrase)²⁹ the text becomes (more) 'other', and therefore a potential heterotopic site. As Foucault observes, one of the features of a heterotopia is that they "are most often linked to slices of time", which "open onto what might be termed ... heterochronies".³⁰ However, because Foucault believes, incorrectly, that time, unlike space, "was detached from the sacred in the nineteenth century"³¹ – betraying his European social location (and the social location of many development agencies) – he is unable to recognise that sacred heterotopias are sites that connect across sanctified time, so that, for example, a CBS can connect contemporary South African women with the biblical Tamar.

Implicit within these CBS processes, facilitation 'practices' are vital to CBS community-based work, enabling both 'group process' – the active participation of each participant – and the CBS process – the slow but steady procession through the three movements of CBS process.³² Part of the 'conversion' of the socially engaged biblical scholar is becoming 're-schooled' as a facilitator, collaborating with other community-based facilitators so as to enable participatory transformation.

So CBS begins and ends under the control of a particular local community, who use the resources of the CBS, along with a range of other resources, to plan for and implement community-based action. The socially engaged biblical scholar is already involved in the struggles of and work with particular communities for survival, liberation, life, so that the

invitation (and motivation) to do CBS together comes from within this larger praxis. More than half a century of liberation hermeneutics has demonstrated the usefulness of the critical capacities of biblical scholarship to particular liberation struggles. More than twenty-five years of CBS has demonstrated the usefulness of this particular form of liberation hermeneutics to a range of social struggles (both in South Africa and beyond).

CBS processes are focussed on generating a critical-structural-systemic interpretation of the Bible, reinforcing and providing additional critical tools to the capacities already present in the organised community-based group. As Mosala made clear, such structural interpretive resources are crucial not only to a reading of the Bible but also to a reading of reality. The unstructural-individual focus of the dominant forms of Christianity are the default orientation within the church, civil society, and development agencies. And yet religion and the Bible are far more complex, requiring a more critical engagement. CBS does this, and in so doing provides an array of additional tools for a particular community-based group to engage both with a significant faith resource – the Bible – as well as with the structural-systemic dimensions of their realities and so too of the potential areas of social change with these realities.

Religious change

What Mosala is saying, in other words, is that social change requires religious change. This is a central tenet of the Ujamaa Centre's theory of change. Religion cannot be left 'as is' while development work is done. In order for development work to be done, religion, which is part of the very fabric and scaffolding of life for millions of Africans, must be transformed, otherwise it gets in the way of social transformation. CBS is about religious change.

The emphasis on the concept 'contextual' within 'Contextual Bible Study' is a recognition that religion must serve context. "True service submits itself to the cause which it serves, deeming that cause holy".³³ This is why the notion of the 'shape' of the gospel was so important to the struggle against apartheid in South Africa. Albert Nolan argued that what was determinant of the Christian faith (and indeed any faith) was that its 'shape' ought to be 'good news for the poor' (Luke 4:18).³⁴ The significance of faith for social change is that it should offer a particular shape or trajectory to social change, from the prophetic perspective of the poor and marginalised. And just as CBS offers a set of tools for a structural-systemic interpretation of the shape of scripture, so it offers a set of tools for a structural-systemic analysis of South African reality and a set of tools for a structural-systemic trajectory for social change. Method not content is the crucial concern here; CBS does not offer fixed biblical content, it offers a set of methods that are useful for biblical interpretation, social analysis, and social change.

Among the contextual realities that demand social transformation is the ongoing problem of violence against women and children. Colonialism, apartheid, and patriarchy have wreaked a vortex of havoc on African women and children. And while the Bible has voices that collude with and even inspire these destructive forces, the Ujamaa Centre has been working with 2 Samuel 13:1-22, an unfamiliar text in the liturgies and lectionaries of almost every Christian church, but a text that has demonstrated its capacity through CBS processes to empower women in their struggle against gender violence. The CBS we use has the following shape:

2 Samuel 13:1-22 is read aloud, preferably dramatically. After the text has been read a series of questions follow.

1. Read 2 Samuel 13:1-22 together again in small groups. Share with each

other what you think the text is about.

Each small group is then asked to report back to the larger group. Each and every response to question one is summarized on newsprint. After the report-back, the participants return to their small groups to discuss the following questions.

2. Who are the main characters in this story and what do we know about them?

3. What is the role of each of the male characters in the rape of Tamar?

4. What does Tamar say and what does Tamar do? Focus carefully on each element of what Tamar says and does.

When the small groups have finished their discussion, each group is invited to present a summary of their discussion. After this report-back the smaller groups reconvene and discuss the following questions.

5. Are there women like Tamar in your church and/or community? Tell their story.

6. What resources are there in your area for survivors of rape?

Once again, the small groups present their report-back to the plenary group. Creativity is particularly vital here, as often women find it difficult or are unable to articulate their responses. A drama or a drawing may be the only way in which some groups can report.

Finally, each small group comes together to formulate an action plan.

7. What will you now do in response to this Bible study?

The action plan is either reported to the plenary or presented on newsprint for other participants to study after the Bible study.

Questions 2, 3, and 4 are ‘critical-consciousness’ questions, slowing down the reading process by inviting a re-reading of the literary features of the text (and through them opening up space to explore behind-the-text). On either side of these questions that explore the detail of the text are questions that embed the CBS in ‘community-consciousness’. Among these questions each does its own critical work. Question 2 moves the CBS from the spontaneous and varied responses of the participants to a more considered focus on the detail of the text. A focus on character is form of analysis that anyone can do, and yet it is a form of critical analysis, enabling a recognition of the literary dimensions of the text. Question 3 builds on this preliminary literary analysis, using the theme of gender violence to give shape to how the characters are analysed. Participants are enabled, via this question, to recognise the relational dimensions of patriarchy. Patriarchy is not about individual ‘bad men’; it is about the structural-systemic systems that support male power. Question 3 probes this matrix of male power. Question 4 then shifts the focus from male power to female agency. Tamar is a ‘victim’ of rape; but she is much more than this, she is an articulate agent who talks back to power and acts against power. Through her speech and action male power is both delineated and resisted.

More recently, we have constructed a variation on this CBS where we take up the challenge of the many women we have worked with to do work with ‘their men’ around notions of masculinity. The advent of HIV and AIDS and the more recent roll-out of ARVs (antiretroviral drugs) has enabled men to take responsibility for their sexuality and their masculinity. The Ujamaa Centre has been invited into this space, where we have worked with local communities in a quest for redemptive forms of masculinity. At the moment its form is somewhat flexible, but a relatively stable version of it is as follows:

1. *Have you heard this text (2 Samuel 13:1-22) read publically ... on a Sunday? Share with each other if and when and where you have heard this text read.*
2. *Who are the main characters in this story and what do we know about them?*
3. *What is the role of each of the male characters in the rape of Tamar?*
4. *How would you characterize Amnon's masculinity in this text? Consider:*
What prevents Amnon initially from acting on his love for Tamar (v2)?
What is it that changes Amnon's love (v1) to sickness/lust (v2), and then enables him to act on his sickness/lust (v4-6)?
How does he react to Tamar's arguments (v14)?
How does he behave after he has raped Tamar (v15-17)?
5. *What kind of man does Tamar expect or hope Amnon to be? What kind of man could Amnon be according to Tamar? What kind of man does Tamar want? Consider:*
What does she say (v12-13,16), and what do each of the things she says tell us about her understanding of what it means to be 'a man'?
What does she do (v19), and what do each of things she does tell us about her understanding of what it means to be 'a man'?
6. *What are the dominant forms of masculinity in our contexts (in various age groups), and what alternative forms of masculinity can we draw on from our cultural and religious traditions?*
7. *How can we raise the issue of masculinity in our various gender and age-groups?*

Questions 2 and 3 are the same as in the Tamar CBS and accomplish similar critical capacity building. Question 4 in the what we have called the Redemptive Masculinity version is another critical question, probing notions of 'masculinity' in this biblical story (and providing resources for an analysis of masculinity in contemporary South African society). Question 4 also juxtaposes Amnon and Tamar, deconstructing the dominant stereotypes about male self-control and rationality. In this biblical story it is Tamar who is self-controlled and rational and Amnon who is emotional. Question 5 too is a critical question, allowing each of the elements of Tamar's argument to deconstruct dominant notions of masculinity and to reconstruct alternative masculinities.

These two Contextual Bible Studies inhabit the dialogical space between the epistemology of our primary dialogue partners – women who have experienced abuse – and the detail of the text made apparent through the critical capacities of biblical scholarship. Each CBS has the capacity to explore the personal-psychological and the social-structural dimensions of each of their respective areas of focus, namely gender violence and masculinity. In both cases the sets of critical-consciousness questions are followed by a set of community-consciousness questions where participants are able to apply and practice the critical tools they have acquired through the critical consciousness questions. If the CBS site is a safe and sacred space the resources of the CBS processes combine with the resources the community-based group already has to plan for and implement forms of action for social change.

CBS is not about knowing one's Bible better. CBS is about changing an unjust world, using the Bible as a potential 'weapon'³⁵ of struggle. CBS is also uniquely placed to recognise and

participate in the intersections between the related struggles of the poor and marginalised.

Intersecting struggles

The Bible is already a significant resource in many African communities. CBS comes alongside this community-based resource and ‘redeploys’ it for social transformation, liberating it from the dominant and normative theological paradigm, a paradigm that emphasises the personal and individual dimensions of faith. The poor and marginalised already know the God of life, but their Bibles are more ambiguous. The dominant theologies of our time tend to draw on those trajectories within the Bible that blame the poor for being poor, blame the unemployed for being unemployed, blame the HIV-positive for being HIV-positive, blame the abused for being abused, blame the disabled for being disabled, etc.³⁶ CBS recovers other biblical trajectories, those that situate the poor, the unemployed,³⁷ the HIV-positive,³⁸ the abused, the disabled, etc. within particular social and theological structures and systems, enabling these blamed sectors to understand the structures and systems that marginalise them. And by so doing CBS releases the blamed/stigmatised, both theologically and socially, enabling them to reassert their dignity and to work for structural and systemic change.

The theological system that is used to individualise and so blame the woman abused by gender violence is the same theological system that is used to individualise and blame the unemployed person and the HIV-positive person. CBS ‘reveals’ this theological system, exposing it as just one theological system, not ‘the’ theological system. CBS deconstructs the dominant theological systems and offers other more redemptive theological systems, following other trajectories in the Bible.

The very act of interpreting the Bible in other ways develops resilience among the poor and marginalised. Because the Ujamaa Centre works with a wide constituency, most of whom are from marginalised communities, we can reflect across our work more generally on the kinds of capacities that CBS offers. Among these is the capacity to recognise that our socio-cultural, Christian, and biblical traditions are not monovocal; they are contested. Psycho-social resilience has been recognised as a substantive resource in trauma theory. The work of the Ujamaa Centre indicates that building the capacity of marginalised sectors to interpret the Bible from and for their own experience, recognising that there are contending biblical theological trajectories or voices, nurtures what we might call the ‘interpretive resilience’ of those struggling to live abundant lives in the context of gender violence (and other forms of oppression) in a context like South Africa.

Conclusion

CBS is a resource for recognising and reading the neglected trajectories of the Bible, those that focus on the structural and system dimensions of life. And while social activists and development agencies are adept at analysing society in structural and systemic terms, they tend to revert to a default individualist understanding of the Bible. But CBS is not simply another tool for development practitioners to wield in their work. CBS requires the presence of the poor and marginalised to activate and authenticate it. Tamar tells her story of gender violence in 2 Samuel 13:1-22. CBS offers a safe and sacred framework for millions of contemporary Tamar’s to tell their stories and to work together, with those who are willing to come among them, for social transformation.

Endnotes

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1. Gerald O. West, *Contextual Bible Study* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 1993).
 2. Gerald O. West and Phumzile Zondi-Mabizela, "The Bible Story That Became a Campaign: The Tamar Campaign in South Africa (and Beyond)," *Ministerial Formation* 103(2004).
 3. 'CBS' is more than an abbreviation; the Ujamaa Centre has been asked by some of the communities we work with not to call what we do 'Bible study', because, they insist, what we do "is not what we do in church".
 4. <http://ujamaa.ukzn.ac.za/>
 5.
http://www.fecclaha.org/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&layout=item&id=57&Itemid=197
 6. Gerald O. West et al., "Rape in the House of David: The Biblical Story of Tamar as a Resource for Transformation," *Agenda* 61(2004). See also <http://ujamaa.ukzn.ac.za/Libraries/manuals/fhrimpact.sflb.ashx>
 7. Per Frostin, *Liberation Theology in Tanzania and South Africa: A First World Interpretation* (Lund: Lund University Press, 1988), 6.
 8. Steve de Gruchy, "Of Agency, Assets and Appreciation: Seeking Some Commonalities between Theology and Development," in *Keeping Body and Soul Together: Reflections by Steve De Gruchyon Theology and Development*, ed. Beverley G. Haddad (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2015).
 9. James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), 114.
 10. Gayatri C. Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Gary Nelson and L. Grossberg (London: Macmillan, 1988).
 11. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 91.
 12. Gerald O. West, "Newsprint Theology: Bible in the Context of Hiv and Aids," in *Out of Place: Doing Theology on the Crosscultural Brink*, ed. Jione Havea and Clive Pearson (London: Equinox Publishing, 2011).
 13. Beverley G. Haddad, "The Manyano Movement in South Africa: Site of Struggle, Survival, and Resistance," *Agenda* 61(2004).
 14. Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 37-63.
 15. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 223-24.
 16. <http://libcom.org/library/dignitys-revolt-john-holloway> See also John Holloway,

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