

# INTRODUCTION

## CONNECTIONS WITH GENESIS AND SIGNIFICANCE

The book of Exodus records the premiere redemption event of the Old Testament and functions as the sequel to Genesis, with which it connects in several ways. (1) The book's Hebrew title (the English title stems from the LXX and means "to go out") derives from the words **וְאֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת** (*w'ēlleh š'môth*, "and these are the names," which virtually repeat Genesis 46:8ff., both texts detailing the sons of Israel who went down to Egypt. (2) Exodus 13:19 refers to the honoring of Joseph's instructions regarding his bones (Gen 50:22-26). (3) The polarity between light and darkness found in Genesis 1 is redefined in Exodus 8:23 in terms of God's division between Israel and Egypt. Light is associated with Israel while darkness is associated with Egypt. This light/darkness motif continues in Israel's journeys with the cloudy and fiery pillars by day and night (13:21-22; 14:19-20; 19:18; 20:18; 33:9-11; 40:34-38). (4) Exodus records the fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham to make of him a great nation (Gen 12:1-3; 15:5). Though numbering less than one hundred people upon their entrance into Egypt, they numbered 603,550 males over twenty years of age by the beginning of the wanderings (Num 1:46), thus placing the population in the millions. The Exodus facilitated this fulfillment of God's promise. The language of Exodus 1:7 recalls Genesis 1:28, both texts emphasizing a geometric growth. Similarly, both the Hebrew term for the courageous midwives (**מַיַלְדוֹת**, *m<sup>y</sup>all<sup>d</sup>ôth*, Exod 1:21) and Moses' birth (**וַתֵּלֶד**, *wat-tēled*, Exod 2:2) are from the same semantic root as the "generations" (**דֹּלֵדוֹת**, *tôldôth*, Gen 2:4) of the Genesis narratives, indicating shifts in the genealogical line and the promises to the entire nation. (5) The primogeniture rivalry motif (the Isaac/Ishmael, Jacob/Esau, and Ephraim/Manasseh) of Genesis are reworked in terms of God

choosing Israel from the nations, as the tenth plague emphasized (Exod 4:22-23) and reaffirmed (Deut 7:7). (6) The death angel sent to kill Moses' uncircumcised son (Exod 4:24-26) reaffirms the importance of circumcision (Genesis 17). (7) The Sabbath commandment (Exod 20:8-11) is issued in the context of the first Sabbath (Gen 2:1-3). (8) God's revelation to Moses (Exod 3:6,15) presupposes the patriarchal history of Genesis. These are but a few of the connections with Genesis which indicate the people did grow into a great nation, were given a covenant at Sinai, and began their journey to the promised land, in accordance with the fulfillment of the promises of God to the patriarchs. All of the above points to Exodus as the sequel to Genesis, which describes the deliverance of the children of Israel by God and the establishment of a new covenant between God and Israel. The rest of the Old Testament looks back on the exodus of Israel from Egypt as the primary redemptive event in Israel's history.<sup>1</sup>

This primary redemptive event became central to the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. God's redemption of Israel became the foundation for Israelite faith and practice reflected in the many Old Testament allusions to the Exodus as the basis for obedience to the covenant, proper ethical treatment of others, the establishment of the sovereignty of God, a national dateline marking the nation's history, and a standard for the measurement of all subsequent

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<sup>1</sup>This introduction represents a revision and expansion of the introduction to Exodus that appears in R.C. Bailey, "Exodus," in *Old Testament Introduction*, The College Press NIV Commentary, ed. by M. Mangano (Joplin, MO.: College Press, 2005), pp. 122-140. For discussions on the connections of Exodus with Genesis see: R.B. Dillard and T. Longman III, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), p. 57; R.K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), p. 566; E.J. Young, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), pp. 62-63; J.E. Hartley, "Exodus: Message," in *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed. W.S. LaSor, D.A. Hubbard, and F.W. Bush (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), p. 63; J.P. Fokkelman, "Exodus," in *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, ed. by R. Altar and F. Kermode (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), pp. 56-65; N.M. Sarna, *Exploring Exodus: The Heritage of Biblical Israel* (New York: Schocken, 1986), pp. 5-6; idem, *Exodus* (Philadelphia/New York: Jewish Publication Society, 1991), p. xi; W.H. Propp, *Exodus 1-18: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), pp. 31-32; C. Meyers, *Exodus*, NCBC (New York: Cambridge, 2005), p. 1.

events. For the Christian, Exodus serves similar functions, pointing to the important work of redemption as seen in the New Testament's record of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. These issues impact significantly the purpose and hermeneutics of this commentary.<sup>2</sup>

## HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND

The exodus from Egypt occurred at the end of the late bronze age (ca. 1550–1200). Politically, several new empires developed in the ancient Near East during this period. The Hurrian state of Mitanni covered northwest Mesopotamia (Syria to the Zagros Mountains). Northwest of Mitanni lay the Hittites. East of Mitanni stood Assyria. Egypt was on the rise, having just recovered from the Hyksos domination (1700–1500). With the defeat of the Hyksos, Egypt entered a period of expansion northeast into Asia. This put Egypt in conflict with Mitanni for control of Syria. After fifty years of intermittent fighting both sides agreed to cease hostilities in order to deal with the Hittites. For another fifty years Mitanni and Egypt were at peace, during which time Egypt reached the zenith of power under Amenophis III (1403–1364) who engaged in a life of luxury and building projects. The Amarna revolution occurred under Amenophis IV (1366–1317). He began the worship of Aten (the Solar Disk), proclaimed it the only true god, changed his name to Akhenaten (“the Splendor of Aten”), and built a new capital, Akhetaten, at the modern site of Tell el-Amarna. The Amarna Letters, discovered there in 1887, were written from Egyptian vassals in Syria-Palestine to Amenophis III and IV. They reveal the opulence and religious interests of Amenophis III and IV, which diverted their attention from Syria-Palestine allowing a state of anarchy to arise. The Hittites defeated Mitanni and put a vassal on the throne. Assyria took the northeastern part of the empire and Asia, ending Egyptian control of the area. Under the Nineteenth Dynasty Egypt

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<sup>2</sup>For representative discussions of the significance of Exodus see: Sarna, *Exploring Exodus*, pp. 1-2; R. Hendel, “The Exodus in Biblical Memory,” *JBL* 120 (2001): 601; K.A. Kitchen, “Exodus, The,” *ABD*, 2:701; W.H. Propp, *Exodus 19-40* (New York: Doubleday, 2006), pp. 795-804.

regained control of Syria-Palestine under Ramses II (1290–1224). Ramses II completed his last years in building activities. Merneptah, who succeeded his father ca. 1220, faced an invasion by the People of the Sea from the west. He commemorated his defeat of them in the famous stele named for him, which contains the first extrabiblical reference to Israel. These interactions produced international alliances in which nations adopted each other's culture and gods. The literature of various cultures was translated as Akkadian became the international business and governmental language. The massive syllabic and ideographic cuneiform was surpassed by the Canaanite development of alphabetic writing with approximately twenty-five symbols. In addition to the above, the exceptional texts of Ras Shamara Ugarit produced parallels that illuminated much of Israelite culture. Into this context falls the knotty problem of the evidence for, and date of, the Exodus.<sup>3</sup>

## HISTORY OF INTERPRETATION

### THE EXODUS EVENT

Modern scholarship has failed to reach a consensus relative to the Exodus event. Some scholars accept its historicity,<sup>4</sup> while others type the account as folk tradition, or the like.<sup>5</sup> All scholarship falls within these extremes, exhibiting varying combinations of the two.

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<sup>3</sup>See especially: Hartley, "Exodus: Historical Background," in *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed. by W.S. LaSor, D.A. Hubbard, and F.W. Bush (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), pp. 52-58; J. Bright, *A History of Israel*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981), pp. 108-133.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. e.g., W.F. Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan: A Historical Analysis of Two Contrasting Faiths* (New York: Doubleday, 1968), pp. 159, 164; J. Bright, *History of Israel*, pp. 120ff.; G.L. Archer, Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody, 1964), pp. 164, 213-223; Young, *Introduction*, p. 67; Dillard and Longman, *Introduction*, pp. 58-62; Hartley, "Exodus: Historical Background," pp. 58-59.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. e.g., J.M. Miller and J.H. Hayes, *A History of Israel and Judah* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), pp. 67-68, 78-79; J.A. Soggin, *An Introduction to the History of Israel and Judah*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: SCM, 1993), pp. 108-139; Propp, *Exodus 19-40*, pp. 735-757.

Kitchen has provided a useful summary of some of the major shifts in this continuum (e.g., Bright – no doubt there was an exodus; Anderson – an exodus interpreted through Israel’s faith; Garbini – while the probability of the exodus exists there is no way to verify the event; Lemche – the Exodus traditions are legendary).<sup>6</sup> Depending upon the position taken, scholarship has also questioned the number of people departing Egypt, the biblical description of Moses, the date and substance of the Exodus, and the Tabernacle. However, for those accepting the historicity of the event, the date of the Exodus has remained the most thorny problem. The following summarizes the general issues.<sup>7</sup>

Dates for the Exodus range from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> centuries, with the 15<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> being the most popular centuries among scholars.<sup>8</sup> No direct, extrabiblical evidence weights any one of these centuries more than the others, making the extant, circumstantial evidence open to interpretation. This situation allows each scholar to exploit the data in favor of a particular century.

***Traditionally the 15<sup>th</sup> century date fits better with the biblical record than with the archaeological record.*** First Kings 6:1 states Solomon began to build the temple 480 years after the Exodus during the fourth year of his reign (dated 967), establishing a date of 1447.

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<sup>6</sup>Kitchen, “Exodus, Book of,” *ABD*, 2:701-702; B.W. Anderson, *Understanding the Old Testament*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ/London: Prentice-Hall, 1978), pp. 43-45; G. Garbini, *History and Ideology in Ancient Israel* (New York: Crossroads, 1988), p. 15; N.P. Lemche, *Ancient Israel: A New History of Israelite Society*, The Biblical Seminar 5 (Sheffield: Sheffield, 1995), p. 109; Meyers, *Exodus*, pp. 2-4.

<sup>7</sup>Hendel, “The Exodus,” p. 602 (esp. n. 3), has noted some of the more pertinent, recent works dealing with the historicity of the Exodus: B. Halpern, “The Exodus and the Israelite Historians,” *ErIsr* 24 (1993): 89-96; idem, “The Exodus from Egypt: Myth or Reality,” in *The Rise of Ancient Israel*, ed. by Hershel Shanks (Washington, DC: Biblical Archaeological Society, 1992), pp. 86-117; A. Malamat, “The Exodus: Egyptian Analogies,” in *Exodus: The Egyptian Evidence*, ed. by E.S. Frerichs and L.H. Lesko (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997), pp. 15-26; C.A. Redmount, “Bitter Lives: Israel in and out of Egypt,” in *The Oxford History of the Biblical World*, ed. by M.D. Coogan (New York: Oxford, 1998), pp. 79-121. Dillard and Longman, *Introduction*, p. 59.

<sup>8</sup>G.A. Rendsburg, “The Date of the Exodus and the Conquest/Settlement: The Case for the 1100s,” *VT* 42 (1992): 512-513. See also: Harrison, *Introduction*, p. 315; Hartley, “Exodus: Historical Background,” p. 58.

Judges 11:26 records Jephthah's negotiations with the king of Ammon. Jephthah claims Israel held Moab since the entrance into the land 300 years earlier. Jephthah's date establishes the date of about 1400 for the conquest, thus corroborating the date of 1447 for the date of the Exodus.<sup>9</sup> Genesis 15:13 lists the predetermined period of slavery to be 400 years, covering four generations (v. 16), which coordinates with the genealogy of Moses: Moses was the great-grandson of Levi, son of Jacob (Exod 6:1,16,18,20). Joseph's great-great-grandson, Jair, participated in Joshua's wars of conquest (Gen 50:23; Num 32:39-41; Deut 3:14; Josh 13:1; 17:1). Moses' birth occurred after the onset of the oppression, and he was 80 years old at the Exodus (2:1; 7:7; Deut 34:7), indicating that the enslavement period lasted at least this long. Finally, the MT in Exodus 12:40-41 gives the figure 430 years as the time Israel spent in Egypt, but the Samaritan Pentateuch and the LXX (as well as Gal 3:17) include the length of stay in Canaan, beginning with the call of Abraham as part of this 430 year period. Thus the genealogies leave room only for about a century or so for the period in Egypt. This would allow the following chronological schema, or the like:

1. The Exodus occurred 430 years from Abraham's call, Gal 3:16-17.
2. Abraham was 75 years old in Haran, leaving 430 years, Gen 12:4.
3. Abraham was 100 when Isaac born, leaving 405 years, Gen 21:5.
4. Isaac was 40 at marriage, leaving 365 years, Gen 22:20.
5. Isaac was 60 at Jacob/Esau's birth, leaving 345 years, Gen 25:26.
6. Jacob was 130 when he came to Egypt, leaving 215 years, Gen 47:9.
7. Thus Israel grew into a nation during 215 years of living in Egypt.

However, the above fails to note the statement that God called Abraham "while he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran" (Acts 7:1-2). Assuming this call occurred 5 years before produces Abraham's age of 70 years at his call rather than 75. This means the period in Egypt must be adjusted to 210 years rather than 215. This figure of 70 years fits better with Scripture and Jewish tradition.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Dillard and Longman, *Introduction*, p. 59; Archer, *Survey*, pp. 212-214; Harrison, *Introduction*, pp. 315-317.

<sup>10</sup>C. Houtman, *Exodus* (Kampen: KOK, 1993), 2:203, observes, "the length was 210 years; the exodus took place 430 years after YHWH had spoken to Abraham on 15<sup>th</sup> Nisan; 400 years after the birth of Isaac (Gen. 15:13 is applied to that)." Then in n. 127 he cites "Pseudo-Philo IX, 3; *Mek.* I, 111ff.;

Exodus 12:41 says the 430 years was “to the very day,” which occurred on the first Passover. Joshua 5:11 says the people ate of the land the day after the “Passover, that very day.” The phrases “to the very day” (וְיָמֵינוּ בְּעֵשֶׂת הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה), *wayʾhî bʾešem hayyôm hazzeh*) and “that very day” (*bʾešem hayyôm hazzeh*) are identical and seem to indicate a lining up of chronology. Abraham’s call, Isaac’s birth, and the Passover occur on the same day; 430 years figures from the call; 400 from Isaac’s birth.

Scholars arguing for a 15<sup>th</sup> century date pointed to Garstang’s excavations at Jericho. Garstang identified a city “D,” which he concluded was constructed in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and destroyed approximately a century later, as the “Jericho” destroyed by Joshua.<sup>11</sup> However, excavations by Kenyon in 1952 forced a reinterpretation of this archaeological data. Kenyon established that city “D” actually should be dated to the third millennium B.C. and that, while evidence once existed for a 14<sup>th</sup>-century level which might have been attacked by Joshua, this evidence had long since eroded away.<sup>12</sup>

The Amarna Tablets (discovered in 1887; consisted of 350 tablets, about 150 of which were written from Syro-Palestinian vassals to their Egyptian overlords, Amenhotep III [ca. 1405–1368] and Akhenaton [ca. 1370–1353]) factor into attempts to establish the 15<sup>th</sup>-century date. Most of the letters complain of the Habiru, who perennially overran the country. Many scholars equated these events with Joshua’s conquest. More recent research, however, indicates the Habiru should be associated with a social class, making this an internal social problem, rather than any linguistic connection with the Hebrews, which would point to an invasion by a powerful army.<sup>13</sup>

***Traditionally the 13<sup>th</sup>-century date fits better with the archaeological record than the biblical record.*** (1) Some scholars identify Pithom

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*ExR.* XVIII, 11; *PWB*, X, 20ff.; Rashi . . . and e.g. Le Déant\*, *Nuit*, 149ff.; Ginzebrg\*, V, 420; Rosmarin\*, 59,” as some of the ancient Jewish scholars arguing for this chronology.

<sup>11</sup>J. Garstang, *The Foundations of Bible History: Joshua–Judges* (New York: R.R. Smith, 1931), p. 146.

<sup>12</sup>K.M. Kenyon, *Archaeology of the Holy Land*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1979), pp. 208, 331-332; cf. K.M. Kenyon, *Digging Up Jericho: The Results of the Jericho Excavations, 1952–1956* (New York: Praeger, 1957); Harrison, *Introduction*, p. 318.

<sup>13</sup>Harrison, *Introduction*, pp. 318-321.

and Rameses (Exod 1:1) with Pi-Ramses built by Seti I or Ramses II in the 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>14</sup> Monet's Excavations at Tanis-Avaris indicate the reconstruction of the city by Seti I, while literary artifacts mention Ramses II and his successors. Because contemporary texts mentioned the employment of Hapiru to drag the huge blocks of masonry used there, scholars identified Rameses as the Pharaoh of the oppression.<sup>15</sup> Petrie's excavations at Tell el-Retabeh uncovered massive brickwork, which scholars interpreted as evidence for Pithom mentioned in Exodus 1:11, again pointing to Rameses II as the Pharaoh of the oppression. Taken together, this evidence seemed sufficient to identify the Hyksos invasion of Egypt with the Hebrew's occupation of the land of Goshen in the Nile delta (Gen 47:1,4,6,27). All of the above encouraged scholars to argue the Exodus occurred 430 years after the founding of Tanis-Avaris around 1300 B.C. (2) The "Israel stele" of Merneptah celebrates a victory over several Canaanite groups in his fifth year (1209). The stele mentions Israel by name, indicating the Exodus must have occurred earlier. (3) Evidence of Israelite settlements built upon destroyed Canaanite sites occur at Bethel, Tel Zeror, Beth Shemesh, and possibly Tell Beith Mirsim. In addition, Hazor was destroyed in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, possibly in the time of Joshua–Judges. Destruction of several Canaanite cities, the resettling of some cities by peoples of both similar and different cultures, and a surge of population by pastoral peoples, all over a two-century period, argue for the settlement patterns portrayed in the book of Judges. (4) Egyptian documents from the time of Merneptah and Rameses II support the use of Semites as slaves during this period. (5) The 13<sup>th</sup>-century date fits well with the time spent in Egypt (400 years according to Gen 15:13 and 430 years according to Exod 12:40).<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Cf. D.B. Redford, "Exodus I 11," *VT* 13 (1963): 409-410.

<sup>15</sup>P. Monet, *Les nouvelles fouilles de Tanis* (1929–33).

<sup>16</sup>For detailed discussions relating to the dating of the Exodus see: Harrison, *Introduction*, pp. 321-323; Hartley, "Exodus: Historical Background," pp. 59-60; Dillard and Longman, *Introduction*, pp. 59-62; J.J. Bimson, "Redating the Exodus," *JSOTSupp* 5 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1978), pp. 1-351; Archer, *Survey*, pp. 164, 212-223; J. Finegan, *Light from the Ancient Past: The Archaeological Background of Judaism and Christianity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1959), pp. 120-121; a very succinct summary is provided by Sarna, *Exodus*, pp. xiv-xv.

*The contentious nature of the data.* Regardless of the century chosen, objections are raised for nearly every conclusion drawn.<sup>17</sup> Some of the more pertinent ones are listed here. Those arguing against a 15<sup>th</sup>-century date contend that “Pithom and Raamses” (Exod 1:11) should not be identified with Maskhout and Tanis because both of these were unoccupied in the 15<sup>th</sup>. They argue instead that Qantir contains evidence of 15<sup>th</sup>-century occupation, making it a better site than Tanis as Ramses; “Raamses” (1:11) results from later textual updating. Similarly, pro-13<sup>th</sup> scholars have identified the 13<sup>th</sup>-century destructions of cities in Syria-Palestine as those destroyed by Joshua, while pro-15<sup>th</sup>-century scholars counter these 13<sup>th</sup>-century destruction sites need not be identified with Joshua’s conquest because many of the 15<sup>th</sup>-century destruction sites traditionally identified with Egyptian attacks on Hyksos fortifications can just as easily be identified with Joshua’s conquests. In addition, those arguing for a 13<sup>th</sup>-century date assume the 400 and 430 years refer to the time spent in Egypt, while those who contend for a 15<sup>th</sup>-century date allow the 400 and 430 years to begin with Abraham’s call and end with the Exodus. Finally, those arguing for a 15<sup>th</sup>-century date contend the 480 years of 1 Kings 6:1 is a literal figure, while those arguing for a 13<sup>th</sup>-century date counter it “. . . may be an ‘aggregate’ or ‘symbolic’ number . . . based on the total of twelve generations of 40 years each.”<sup>18</sup>

The above illustrates the difficulty of the problem. Just about any position receives a counterinterpretation, indicating “the enormous amount of care that must be exercised in an attempt to interpret and correlate archaeological data with a view to elucidating and establishing the larger historical pattern.”<sup>19</sup> The nature of the archaeological data compounds the problem further: “They are not brute facts with which the biblical material must conform and that can prove or disprove the Bible. Archaeology rather produces evidence that, like

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<sup>17</sup>Cf. J.H. Walton, *Chronological Charts of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), pp. 29-30, for summaries and rebuttals for each century.

<sup>18</sup>Hartley, “Exodus: Historical Background,” p. 60. See also: Dillard and Longman, *Introduction*, pp. 59-62; Bimson, “Redating,” pp. 42, 47-48, 67-80; D.N. Freedman, “The Chronology of Israel and the Ancient Near East,” in *The Bible and the Ancient Near East*, ed. by G.E. Wright (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1961), pp. 206-208.

<sup>19</sup>Harrison, *Introduction*, pp. 324-325.

the Bible, must be interpreted."<sup>20</sup> This much can be said. A straightforward reading of Genesis–Exodus fits well with ancient Near Eastern culture.<sup>21</sup> The Joseph story reflects Egyptian life and customs. Egypt did employ Semitic peoples. Some of the names, particularly Moses', are Egyptian. Subject peoples' escape from oppressors was not unique to Israel. The invention of such a background history is negligible from a social-psychological perspective. Whether or not the exact date is ever known, the significance of the Exodus lies in its theological impact on succeeding generations of Israelites and Christians, as the very existence of the book indicates.<sup>22</sup>

### AUTHORSHIP

As with the other pentateuchal books, the acceptance of Mosaic authorship of Exodus prevailed until the rise of modern criticism. The documentary theories inserted in place of Mosaic authorship all have difficulties. (1) Traditional critical scholarship argues J, E, and P may be found in Exodus. The distinguishing of J from E (or any other of the supposed documents) has proven difficult for scholarship. (2) Prodocumentary scholarship has failed to reach unanimity in determining (a) whether the material at the end of the book relating to the Tabernacle is a separate source or redacted material, or (b) the relationship between the legal material and the narrative texts. (3) Early critical scholars thought the Decalogue originated in E, whereas modern scholarship believes the legal material to be independent compositions inserted into the narrative. (4) Some critical scholars use the Hittite treaties as models of the integration of legal and narrative (historical prologue), though recent scholarship has criticized this. (5) So critical scholarship has failed to reach a consensus regarding the book's composition and authorship.<sup>23</sup>

Contrary to these theories, three passages in Exodus indicate writing activity of Moses (17:14; 24:4; 34:4,27-29). Further, the New

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<sup>20</sup>Dillard and Longman, *Introduction*, p. 61.

<sup>21</sup>Meyers, *Exodus*, p. 10.

<sup>22</sup>See also, Hartley, "Exodus: Historical Background," pp. 59-60.

<sup>23</sup>See C. Houtman, *Exodus*, 1:226; Dillard and Longman, *Introduction*, p. 58; Propp, *Exodus 19–40*, pp. 723-734.

Testament affirms that Moses wrote the law (Mark 1:44; John 7:19-22; Acts 26:23). This view of Mosaic authorship recognizes the lack of continuity of the narrative, as well as the possibility of later insertions. Finally, Mosaic authorship would involve the ancient Near Eastern practice of recording of events as they occurred. These “documents” would serve as a reservoir to assemble the material in a general sequence of events rather than a precise chronology.<sup>24</sup>

## GENRE AND STRUCTURE

In terms of genre and structure Exodus exists as a paradox. On the one hand the genre and structure seem very simple; on the other they nearly defy analysis — “there is no single organization of the materials that captures all the possible features that one could take into account.”<sup>25</sup> The book’s major genre, *theological history*, which informs “readers about God’s great acts in the past” and reveals the “nature of God in his acts,”<sup>26</sup> is actually comprised of the three broad genres of narrative, law, and poetry. These three, in turn, are comprised of still smaller genres, giving the book a focusing effect. Similarly, the book’s tripartite structure of narrative of salvation from Egyptian bondage (1:1–18:27), the law (19:1–24:18), and Tabernacle worship (25:1–40:38) are nearly identical to the book’s broad genres of narrative, law, and poetry. So what seems on the surface to be simple “clear-cut major divisions” are actually “one long, continuous, and sequential account” in which “even legal and ritual matters find expression within a narrative framework,” while, at the same time “no attempt is made to be comprehensive; only such individual episodes are highlighted as are deemed to be of major significance.”<sup>27</sup> Such intermeshing of genre and structure allows the book to “be divided in more than one way, depending on what the reader attends to in the book.”<sup>28</sup> The following illustrate some of these interrelationships.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Harrison, *Introduction*, pp. 568-569.

<sup>25</sup>Meyers, *Exodus*, p. 18.

<sup>26</sup>Dillard and Longman, *Introduction*, p. 64.

<sup>27</sup>Sarna, *Exploring Exodus*, p. 6; idem, *Exodus*, p. xii.

<sup>28</sup>Dillard and Longman, *Introduction*, p. 62.

<sup>29</sup>For a discussion of Exodus as narrative see, Propp, *Exodus 1–18*, pp. 32-34.

## GENRE

The interweaving of the three genres of narrative, law, and poetry, through the use of smaller genres is “one of the chief characteristics of Exodus.”<sup>30</sup> These combine to form prophetic and theological history which reveal the nature of God in his acts: the *birth story* of Moses (2:1-10) focuses on the key issues that molded the future leader of Israel; *fragmented stories*, such as Zipporah’s circumcision of her son (4:24-26), reinforce God’s demand for obedience;<sup>31</sup> *theophanies* (God’s appearance to men), such as the burning bush (ch. 3), the appearance to the people at Sinai (ch. 19), and the appearance to Moses (33:19-23) mark key episodes; *poetic elements*, such as God’s revelation of his name to Moses (3:15), or the creation of the altar celebrating the victory of Amalek (17:16); *hymns*, as the one celebrating the deliverance from Egypt at the Red Sea (15:1-21); *paraenetic discourse* (i.e., dialogue containing wisdom or advice), as the advice to obey God in order to maintain good health (15:26), or the advice to obey God in order to become a kingdom of priests, holy to God, and celebrated among the nations (19:3-6), or the advice to obey the angel sent before the nation (23:20-33), all reflecting God’s interest in the lives of the people, regardless of its significance; *judicial, moral, and ceremonial law*, commonly called the “covenant code,” emphasizing proper conduct among people (20:33–23:33); *genealogical information*, providing the family trees for key characters in the history (1:1-5; 6:14-27); *lists*, such as those providing the items necessary for the construction of the Tabernacle (25:1-31; 35:4–40:33); *a census*, necessary for the establishing of Tabernacle “tax” in order to facilitate its service (30:13-16); *chronological notices*, as Moses’ age when he confronted Pharaoh (7:7), the length of time in Egypt (12:40-41), the time of the nation’s arrival at Sinai (19:1), or the date the Tabernacle was set up (40:2); *ritual, cultic, and ceremonial laws*, necessary for the proper implementation of the daily Tabernacle service and festivals (4:24-26; 12:44,48-49). All of the above, and other, similar material, weave together into a coherent narrative, specifically “a theological exposition – a document of

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<sup>30</sup>T.E. Fretheim, *Exodus* (Louisville, KY: John Knox, 1991), p. 6.

<sup>31</sup>J.H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), pp. 248-249.

faith,”<sup>32</sup> which bridges the events of the patriarchs and the new nation developing from them, and point to new theological motifs in the Old and New Testaments.<sup>33</sup>

## STRUCTURE

These genres are imbedded in a tripartite division which emphasizes the motifs of redemption (1:1–18:27), a covenant (19:1–24:18), and worship (25:1–40:38), or the like. This simple structure allows a logical progression from one of the major pericopes to the other — people redeemed must enter into a proper covenant with their redeemer if they are properly to worship him. Within each of these larger pericopes are smaller units whose narrative aspects prefigure later ones through specific “verbal and thematic links.” This “mirroring effect . . . provides an internal hermeneutic,” which “looks both backward and forward, catching the reader up on what has preceded, while anticipating future developments.”<sup>34</sup> The following illustrate some of these issues.<sup>35</sup>

*The birth story of Moses* prefigures the water motif that played out in the history of the nation’s salvation from Egypt. When Pharaoh decreed that all the male babies should be drowned (1:22), baby Moses was placed in an ark and hidden among the reeds of the Nile. Pharaoh’s daughter rescued him, giving him his name (meaning “to draw out”). These events prefigure the rescue of Israel when it safely crossed the Sea of Reeds (Red Sea).<sup>36</sup>

*The ten plagues* occur in series, three disasters in each, with the last unrelated to any natural occurrences, indicating God’s hand behind the event. Pharaoh is forewarned of the first two plagues in each of the series, but not of the third (7:16-24; 8:1-7,16-18[12-14 in Heb. text],20-24[16-20]; 9:1-7,8-12,13-21; 10:3-6,21-29). In the first plague of each series God commands Moses to meet Pharaoh “in

<sup>32</sup>Sarna, *Exodus*, p. xv.

<sup>33</sup>See also: Dillard and Longman, *Introduction*, p. 64; N.M. Sarna, “Exodus, Book of,” *ABD*, 2:693-694.

<sup>34</sup>Fretheim, *Exodus*, p. 7.

<sup>35</sup>Cf. Propp, *Exodus 1–18*, pp. 37-38, for a discussion of the various structures scholars assign to the book.

<sup>36</sup>Sarna, “Exodus, Book of,” 2:695.

the morning” (7:15; 8:20; 9:13), while no such time command exists in the other two plagues of each series. The first plague of each series contains the command to “Station/Present yourself to Pharaoh” (Exod 7:15; 8:20; 9:13), the second contains the command “Go to Pharaoh” (9:1; 10:3), and the third contains no such instruction (8:16-19; 9:8-12; 10:21-29). The first series is brought on by Aaron, while the third series is brought on by God.<sup>37</sup> Within this general structure three Hebrew words, לָךְ (lāk, from הָלַךְ, hālak, “to go, come, walk,” 7:15), בֹּא (bō’, from בָּא, bō’, “come in, come, go in, go,” 8:1[7:26], 9:1), and נִשְׁבּ/נִשְׁבּ (yśb/nśb, “take one’s stand,” “be stationed by appointment,” 7:15; 8:20[16]; 9:13) dominate. They combine progressively to create an intensity of action and deed. The use of yśb/nśb (“take one’s stand,” “be stationed by appointment”) in the first plague of each series yields an image of Moses’ “preparing for the confrontation” (7:15; 8:20[16]; 9:13). The use of bō’ (“come in, come, go in, go”) in the second plague of each series yields the image of God’s presence in the confrontation (8:1[7:26]; 9:1; 10:1). The absence of any similar term in the third plague of each series reflects the intensity of the situation by having this third plague proceed almost immediately, without any confrontation or discussion between the warring parties. All of this is set up by the first plague, which contains both hālak (“to go, come, walk,” 7:15) and nśb (“take one’s stand,” “be stationed by appointment,” 7:15), when God first commands Moses “Go and station yourself. . .” (7:15). The series ends with the tenth plague, which possesses no such terms, but contains instead a short narrative detailing the purpose and significance of this last plague (11:1-3). In this way the first nine plagues build toward the climaxing tenth. The first nine plagues (all based in natural phenomena except for the timing element in which the plague is initiated at Moses’ command) build in intensity through the ninth. A brief interlude occurs before the most powerful and devastating plague (which is grounded in no natural phenomena) against Pharaoh – the death of his firstborn, and all the firstborn of Egypt (11:4). In this way there is a continued heightening of effect which illustrates the growing power and sovereignty of God as opposed to

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.; see also, idem, *Exploring Exodus*, pp. 75-77, esp. Table 4.2, for the structure of the plagues. This commentary develops a more detailed chart which attempts to highlight all of the issues; see below at 7:8-13:16.

the weakening Pharaoh, thus answering the question of which deity is the true god. All of which prepares Israel for its future covenant with Yahweh.<sup>38</sup>

*The hardening of Pharaoh's heart* employs three different words (כבד, חזק, and קשה; *kbd*, *hʒq*, and *qsh*) to describe the process. Yahweh (4:21; 7:3; 9:12; 10:1,20,27; 11:10; 14:4,8,17) and Pharaoh (8:15,32; 9:34) harden his heart in some verses, while others simply state Pharaoh's heart was hard (7:13,14,22; 8:19; 9:35). The specific nuances of these uses are explored in an excursus, but we may state here that a synthesis of these uses indicates a sharing of responsibility between the two beings – God demanded and Pharaoh responded, the result being Pharaoh's heart became hard. Finally, this motif's occurrence in conjunction with the plagues (chs. 4–14) serves to intensify even more the combat between these two deities.

*Pharaoh's Negotiations* represent another intensification of the contest between God and Pharaoh. Sandwiched between the hardening accounts, they reveal a weakening of Pharaoh's power while simultaneously his heart becomes, paradoxically, harder. Pharaoh's first proposal reflects his nonrecognition of God: "*Who is the LORD, that I should obey him and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, and I will not let Israel go*" (5:2, emphasis added). In the second proposal Pharaoh no longer asks disrespectfully, "*Who is the LORD?*" Summoning Moses and Aaron he says, "*Go, sacrifice to your God here in the land*" (8:25, emphasis added). In the third proposal Pharaoh attempts to regain lost ground by making a counteroffer which contains the command to sacrifice only a short distance away, coupled with a request for intercessory prayer: "*I will let you go to sacrifice to the LORD your God in the desert, but you must not go very far. Now pray for me*" (8:28, emphasis added). The fourth proposal reflects Pharaoh's weakening position by (a) his sending for Moses and Aaron, (b) his acknowledgment of his sin, (c) his requesting of intercessory prayer, and (d) the proposal to do just what God asks:

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<sup>38</sup>See also: Hartley, "Exodus: Message," pp. 68-70; Young, *Introduction*, pp. 64-65. Note that since God's covenantal name YHWH was not pronounced by devout Jews, scholars are unsure of the exact pronunciation. The form "Yahweh" is probably the most widely accepted. One of the reasons for its use here is for the convenience of those readers who are unfamiliar with the reading of the YHWH tetragrammaton. For more specific, theological reasons for the choice of Yahweh, see "Hermeneutics" below.

“Then *Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron. ‘This time I have sinned,’* he said to them. *‘The LORD is in the right, and I and my people are in the wrong. Pray to the LORD, for we have had enough of this thunder and hail. I will let you go; you don’t have to stay any longer’*” (9:27-28, emphasis added). Prior to the fifth proposal Pharaoh’s officials, in an apparent recognition of God’s power in the destruction of the land, advise Pharaoh to let the people go. Pharaoh responds by commanding Israel to go worship, but counters with the command to leave their children, ultimately refusing to let them go, as he drives Moses and Aaron from his presence:

Pharaoh’s officials said to him, *“How long will this man be a snare to us? Let the people go, so that they may worship the LORD their God. Do you not yet realize that Egypt is ruined?”* Then Moses and Aaron were brought back to Pharaoh. *“Go, worship the LORD your God,”* he said. *“But just who will be going?”* Moses answered, *“We will go with our young and old, with our sons and daughters, and with our flocks and herds, because we are to celebrate a festival to the LORD.”* Pharaoh said, *“The LORD be with you—if I let you go, along with your women and children! Clearly you are bent on evil. No! Have only the men go; and worship the LORD, since that’s what you have been asking for.”* Then Moses and Aaron were driven out of Pharaoh’s presence (10:7-11, emphasis added).

In the sixth proposal Pharaoh again reverts to an admission of sin and requests forgiveness and prayer for the removal of the plague:

Pharaoh quickly summoned Moses and Aaron and said, *“I have sinned against the LORD your God and against you. Now forgive my sin once more and pray to the LORD your God to take this deadly plague away from me.”* Moses then left Pharaoh and prayed to the LORD. And the LORD changed the wind to a very strong west wind, which caught up the locusts and carried them into the Red Sea. Not a locust was left anywhere in Egypt. *But the LORD hardened Pharaoh’s heart,* and he would not let the Israelites go. *Then the LORD said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand toward the sky so that darkness will spread over Egypt—darkness that can be felt.”* So Moses stretched out his hand toward the sky, and total darkness covered all Egypt for three days. No one could see anyone else or leave his place for three days. Yet all the Israelites had light in the places where they lived. Then

Pharaoh summoned Moses and said, “Go, worship the LORD. *Even your women and children may go with you; only leave your flocks and herds behind*” (10:16-24, emphasis added).

The seventh proposal gives permission for the children to go, but commands the flocks and herds be left behind: “Then Pharaoh summoned Moses and said, ‘Go, worship the LORD. Even your *women and children may go* with you; only leave your flocks and herds behind” (10:24, emphasis added). The eighth proposal contains the command to go coupled with a requested blessing: “Then he summoned Moses and Aaron in the night, and said, ‘*Rise up, go away from my people, both you and the Israelites! Go, worship the LORD, as you said. Take your flocks and your herds, as you said, and be gone. And bring a blessing on me too!*’” (12:31-32, NRSV, emphasis added). Ultimately Pharaoh hardened his heart again, for he pursued Israel only to be drowned in the Red Sea (14).<sup>39</sup>

The ten plagues, the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart, and the negotiations intermesh to produce a story emphasizing the growing power of God against the continually weakening power of the perceived-as-a-god Pharaoh, which itself radicalizes the separation of Israel from Egypt. Israel was freed, redeemed, by God and thus belonged completely to him. These events prepared them for their future relationship with God and pointed to the more important redemptive work of Christ.

*The chronological displacement of several episodes*, if correct, indicates an emphasis of event over chronology. According to this view, the visit of Jethro, in which he gave Moses advice relative to the appointment of judges (18:1ff.), must have occurred after God’s revelation at Sinai. In 18:5 the people were already encamped at “the mountain of God,” but their arrival is not recorded until 19:1-2. According to Sarna, the report

about the organization of the judiciary in Deut 1:9-17 is immediately followed by the notice of the people’s departure from Horeb, implying that the former took place toward the end of the sojourn at Sinai; this is consonant with Num 11:11, 28-32 which testifies to Jethro’s presence in the camp in “the second month of the second year after the Exodus,” so that the report

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<sup>39</sup>Cf. Young, *Introduction*, p. 66.

of Exod 18:27 registering Jethro's departure must be dated after the theophany.

Such an arrangement, "contrasts the friendliness of the Midianites with the treachery of the Amalekites," which provides a good transition to the giving of the law in chapter 20, thus illustrating the narrative's shift in genre.<sup>40</sup>

If these episodes are chronologically displaced, *the episode of the golden calf (32:1–33:23)* traverses the account of the erection of the Tabernacle, highlighting the rejection of God in their midst and the insertion of a god of their own making. So, "The present arrangement of the material draws attention to this and points the way to the only legitimate expression of experiencing God – viz., through divinely authorized means and not through idols."<sup>41</sup> In doing so, it illustrates the holiness of God and the evilness of sin. Further, 25:1–31:18 and 35:1–40:38 create a "mirror effect" that emphasizes Israel's ultimate obedience (cf. comments at the introduction of 25:1ff.).

*Structural similarities between the Sinai Covenant and international treaties*, observed by some scholars, include the following: (a) preamble – identified the author with his titles; (b) historical prologue – setting forth the historical relationship between the suzerain and the vassal; (c) stipulations – demanding loyalty from the vassal and specific rules describing the relationship; (d) provisions – detailing such things as the vassal's obligations, including but not limited to, the obligation to come to the suzerain's court, to provide troops for defense, the proper place the treaty was to be located and the calendar for its public reading; (e) curses and blessings – invoked on the vassal depending upon his obedience or disobedience. Some scholars have noted the above various items in Exodus and Deuteronomy.

Preamble: "I am the LORD your God," Exodus 20:2a

Historical Prologue: "who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery," Exodus 20:2b; cf. Joshua 24:2-13

<sup>40</sup>Sarna, "Exodus, Book of," 2:696; idem, *Exodus*, p. 97. Houtman, *Exodus*, 2:400-401, has offered impressive arguments for the present text as the correct chronological sequence. For the complete discussion see below, "6. The Wisdom of Jethro, 18:1-27."

<sup>41</sup>Sarna, "Exodus, Book of," 2:696. For a full discussion of the issues see the commentary at 18:1-27.

- Stipulations: loyalty demanded in the phrase, “You should have no other gods before me,” Exodus 20:3; specific stipulations are seen in the other ten commandments, Exodus 20:4-7
- Provisions: the law was to be kept in the ark of the covenant, Exodus 25:16; cf. Deuteronomy 10:1-5; public reading of the law was to occur every seven years, Deuteronomy 31:10-13
- Curses and Blessing: pronounced, Deuteronomy 28:1-14,14-68

For those who accept it, this parallel indicates Yahweh’s use of the familiar treaty pattern of the ancient Near East for theological purposes. In this treaty format, with which Moses and the people were familiar, Yahweh bound the people to him because of his past redemptive acts for them. Thus the ten commandments become, not law in the common sense, but policy stating the type of behavior demanded. The “Book of the Covenant” or “Covenant Code” (20:23–23:33) defined and applied this type of behavior contractually to everyday life in terms of Yahweh and his human community, and ultimately pointed the way to the covenant which is written on the heart of every follower of Christ (Jer 31:31).<sup>42</sup>

## NEW TESTAMENT

These and other, similar themes resound through the Bible, finding completion in the New Testament.<sup>43</sup> The Exodus-Salvation of

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<sup>42</sup>For discussions of the ancient Near Eastern treaty formulas and their possible relationship to the Torah see: Hartley, “Exodus: Message,” pp. 72-75; G. Mendenhall, “Ancient Oriental and Biblical Law,” *BA* 17 (1954): 26-46; repr. in *The Biblical Archaeologist Reader 3* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970), pp. 3-24; idem, “Covenant Forms in Israelite Tradition,” *BA* 17 (1954): 50-76; repr. in E.F. Campbell and D.N. Freeman, eds., *The Biblical Archaeologist Reader 3* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1970), pp. 25-53; J.A. Thompson, *The Ancient Near Eastern Treaties and the Old Testament* (London: Tyndale, 1964); R.E. Friedman, *Commentary on the Torah* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001), pp. 234-235; W.W. Hallo, *The Book of the People*, BJS 225 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1991), pp. 55-59; Sarna, *Exploring Exodus*, pp. 137-144; Propp, *Exodus 19-40*, pp. 34-35, 301-302.

<sup>43</sup>See Propp, *Exodus 19-40*, pp. 795-804, for a discussion of the various Exodus themes repeated in the Bible.

Israel occurred as Yahweh's greatest act in the Old Testament. Remembering his promise to Abraham (Gen 12:1-3; 15; 17), Yahweh grew Israel into a great nation, the process of which shaped the national identity. This event, with its wilderness period, became foundational to the interpretation of the Babylonian Captivity, in which the people traveled back from this second captivity, through the wilderness, to the promised land (Isa 35:5-10; 40:3-5; 43:14-21; Hos 2:14-16). Prophets such as Hosea (11:1-2) used the event to interpret Israel's disobedience. Matthew (2:15) expanded Hosea's thought to show how Jesus' life was a microcosm of Israel's history, but with this difference: Jesus, the obedient son, contrasts with Israel, the disobedient son. Both went down into Egypt (Gen 46:8ff.; Exod 1:1ff.; Matt 2:13-15). Both came out of Egypt (Exodus 12-18; Matt 2:15). Both were baptized — Israel in the Red Sea (Exodus 14; 1 Cor 10:1-6); Jesus in the Jordan River (Matt 3:13-17). Both spent time in the wilderness — Israel for forty years, where it failed miserably (Exod 16:35; Num 14:33-34; 32:13; Deut 2:7; 8:2,4; 29:5; Josh 5:6; 14:7; Hos 11:1-2); Jesus, for forty days, where he succeeded (Matt 4:2; Mark 1:13; Luke 4:2).

The ten plagues are reinterpreted throughout Scripture as symbolic of God's wrath and grace, and ultimately heavily employed in the powerful imagery of Revelation. As Childs observes:

The book of Revelation is saturated with the imagery from the plague tradition. . . . The plague tradition . . . theme has become both a cosmological and eschatological battle between God and Satan. No longer is the battle a glorious memory in Israel's past history, but it still lies in the future with its impending threat. The struggle with evil has taken on a new dimension of anguish and terror. The people of God do not stand carefully protected in Goshen, but are called upon to participate in the battle unto death. All the terrors of God and Magog, of the dragon from the deep, of the beasts from Daniel's visions, are combined into a terrifying picture of the Antichrist.<sup>44</sup>

The redemption of Jesus presupposed God's redemption of Israel. Luke's account of the transfiguration mentions that Moses

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<sup>44</sup>Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974), p. 169. See Dillard and Longman, *Introduction*, pp. 64-67.

and Elijah were “speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem” (9:31). The Greek word here is ἔξοδον (*exodon*, “exodus”). The use of the word initiates the imagery of the exodus story.

Jesus was crucified at the Passover (the primary feast celebrating the Exodus), becoming the Passover lamb who died for others (Matt 26:19; Mark 14:16; Luke 22:3; 1 Cor 5:7). In addition, even today Christians speak of trials and tribulations as a “wilderness period,” in which they long for their exodus to their promised land (Heb 3:7–14:13). These few examples indicate that the reader with a good understanding of both the Old and New Testaments sees in the Exodus God’s deliverance of Israel foreshadowing the death of Christ and the establishment of the church.<sup>45</sup>

In giving Israel a new law (covenant), God laid the foundation for the existence of the children of Israel as a nation. However, this temporary covenant with Israel actually foreshadowed the better and final covenant between God and his people. The work of Jesus in redemption occurred in the context of bringing to fruition that law and establishing the new covenant, as the numerous New Testament statements which speak of fulfilling the Old Testament show (e.g., Matt 1:22; 2:15; 3:15; 5:17; 8:17; 12:17; 13:35; 21:4; John 12:38; 13:18; 15:25; 18:9,32; 19:24,28), as well as reinterpreting Old Testament events in the context of New Testament times, events, and practices. Finally, this new covenant, written on the hearts of believers rather than tables of stones (Jer 31:31-34; Heb 8:6-13), indicates the internalizing and spiritualizing of this new agreement by those he redeemed.

The Tabernacle and its worship furnishes the best example of this dynamic. Everything that was used in the Tabernacle worship would be found and explained more fully in the New Testament forms and worship. The Tabernacle emphasized God’s holy presence in Israel. With its outer court, holy place, and most holy place, it accented the various gradations of this holiness of God. The various ceremonies involving ritual cleanness and uncleanness emphasized this gradation also. In the New Testament this presence of Holy God among his people was fulfilled (reinterpreted?) in Jesus,

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<sup>45</sup>See Dillard and Longman, *Introduction*, pp. 64-67.

who “became flesh and tabernacled among us” (John 1:14, author’s translation). Similarly, Hebrews shows in many ways, how the ceremonies of the Tabernacle prefigured the redemption Jesus accomplished as our Passover lamb, as the sacrificial lamb on the day of atonement, etc., who accomplished not a temporary redemption, “because it was impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin” (Heb 10:4), but an eternal redemption when he entered the Holy Place with his own blood (Heb 9:12).<sup>46</sup>

The Christian’s appreciation of the work of Jesus in mankind’s salvation is understood and appreciated in a ratio equal to the understanding of the messages and themes of the Exodus and the book which bears its name.

## HERMENEUTICS

The theological logic of the tripartite division of the book of Exodus into a redemption section (1:1–18:27), a covenant section (19:1–24:18), and a worship/service section (25:1–40:38) resounds throughout the Bible. As Yahweh fulfilled his promises to Abraham, building Israel into a nation, which he redeemed in the Exodus, so these people, once redeemed, became “Yahweh’s people,” entering into a covenant with him. Covenantal obligations meant proper worship and service to Yahweh. These connecting themes reoccur in Exodus in all three divisions: Redemption (6:6; 15:13); Covenant (6:4; 19:5; 34:10,27,28); Worship (3:12; 4:23; 7:16; 8:1,20; 9:1,13; 10:3,7; 23:25). This logic is apparent. Proper worship and service is predicated on obedience. Obedience is predicated on covenantal obligations. Covenantal obligations are predicated upon the redemption of a person or people by another, in Israel’s case, Yahweh.

This redemption-covenant-worship motif of Exodus was foundational to the redeeming work of Jesus for the church. As Yahweh redeemed Israel, so Jesus redeemed individuals designated “the called out” (Gal 3:13,14; 1 Pet 1:18; Rev 14:3). As Yahweh entered into covenant with Israel, so Jesus entered into covenant with those he redeemed (Luke 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25; 2 Cor 3:6; Heb 7:22; 8:6ff.; 9:1ff.; 10:16ff.; 12:24; 13:20). As Yahweh, upon establishing covenant

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid., pp. 67-71.

with Israel, laid out the rules for proper worship and service, so Jesus by establishing his covenant prepared his people for proper worship and service (Rom 15:17; 1 Cor 12:5; 2 Cor 8:18; 9:13; Eph 4:12; Phil 2:17; 1 Tim 1:12).

The purpose of this commentary is to highlight this redemption-covenant-service motif. On the surface this may be seen in the identification of the three divisions as “Redemption from Slavery” (1:1–18:27), “Covenant with the Redeemer” (19:1–24:18), and “Worship of the Redeemer” (25:1–40:38). Beyond this, the commentary employs the newer literary approaches such as repetition, point of view, etc., to explore the literary features of these pericopes in order to determine those significant issues to which the text gives emphasis. Special attention is given to how genre, structure, and other “verbal and thematic links” interact to produce a “mirroring effect,” or other “internal hermeneutic,” whose trajectories, usually at the end of a major pericope (see outline), may then be traced throughout the Old and New Testament, ultimately pointing to its meaning for the Christian today.<sup>47</sup>

Finally, even with the problems inherent in interpreting the Tetragrammaton (יהוה, *YHWH*), I have preferred to use the covenant name, “Yahweh,” rather than the more general term “God,” to emphasize the radical change that came about when Yahweh bound Israel to himself in covenant. Insofar as possible, therefore, “Yahweh” has been used in most passages, except where I am quoting the text of the New International Version, or in the discussion of passages where the more general term, “God,” makes the sense clearer.

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<sup>47</sup>Cf. Fretheim, *Exodus*, p. 7.

# OUTLINE

## **I. REDEMPTION FROM SLAVERY – 1:1–18:27**

### **A. Introduction to the “Sons of Israel,” Pharaoh’s Treatment of Them, and the Birth of Their Redeemer’s Representative – 1:1–2:10**

1. Introduction to the “Sons of Israel” and Pharaoh’s Treatment of Them – 1:1-14
2. Pharaoh’s Plan to Destroy the Nation – 1:15-22
3. The Birth of the Redeemer’s Representative – 2:1-10
4. The Birth of Moses and the New Testament

### **B. The Training, Commissioning, and Family Tree of Moses – 2:11–4:31**

1. The Training of Moses – 2:11-25
2. The Training of Moses in the New Testament
3. The Commissioning of Moses: Theophany and Call – 3:1-12

#### *Excursus: The Nature of Signs and Wonders, אֵימֹת and מוֹפְתִים*

4. The Commissioning: The Meaning of the God’s Name – 3:13-22
5. The Commissioning: Confirming Signs – 4:1-9
6. The Commissioning: Moses’ Mouth – 4:10-17
7. The Commissioning of Moses in the New Testament
8. The Commissioning: Moses Goes to Egypt – 4:18-31

### **C. Negotiating with Pharaoh and the People – 5:1–7:7**

1. Negotiations with Pharaoh: The Situation Worsens – 5:1-23
2. Yahweh Encourages Moses – 6:1-13
3. The Family Tree of Moses – 6:14-27
4. Repetition of Yahweh’s Command and Moses’ Doubts – 6:28-30
5. Yahweh Encourages and Instructs Moses – 7:1-7

### **D. Negotiations, the Plagues, the Passover, the Exodus, Passover Restrictions, and Consecration of the Firstborn – 7:8–13:16**

***Excursus: “Hardening” of Pharaoh’s Heart and the Plagues***

1. Negotiations with Pharaoh – 7:8-13
2. The Plagues – 7:14-11:10
3. The Plagues in the New Testament
4. The Passover and Exodus – 12:1-51
5. Consecration of the Firstborn – 13:1-16
6. The Passover and the New Testament

**E. Crossing the Sea – 13:17-15:21**

1. The Pillars of Cloud and Fire – 13:17-14:4
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