

# Exodus

## Introduction

Chapter 1:1-8 ties the events of the book of Exodus to the close of the book of Genesis. The theological history (the record of "God's great acts in the past," *IOT* 64) continues. There is a dual meaning to theological history: 1) The content recorded is about the great acts of God in covenant giving and fulfilling. 2) The record is theologically selective about redemptive history.

The plot of the story is forebodingly given. The twelve sons of Jacob/Israel lived out their lives in Egypt with favor from the Pharaoh because of Joseph. A considerable amount of time passed and Israel became "exceedingly numerous" (1:7), but "then a new King who did not know about Joseph came to power" (1:8). The stage is set for bitter conflict between the Pharaoh and the Israelites. Eventually, there will be a great exodus of Israel from Egypt enroute to the Promised Land of Canaan. Hence the LXX name of the book.

## 1A. Structure

There are three ways to fix on the shape of the book: time, geography, and contents. Consider some key verses.

### 1B. By time we have:

Background years 1-2

The year up to the exodus 3:1-13:16

The year after the exodus Chapters 13:17-40:38

### 2B. By geography:

Israel in Egypt 1:1-13:16

Israel in the Wilderness enroute to Sinai 13:17-18:27

Israel in the Wilderness at Sinai 19:1-40:38

Obviously, geographically, we have two locations in general, Egypt and the wilderness. The exodus from Egypt and the journey as far as Mount Sinai are what we have in this second book of the law. Thus, Exodus covers a two year period in Egypt and then in the wilderness, but it seems best to outline the book according to its contents.

### 3B. By contents we have (*IOT* 62):

Salvation from Egyptian Bondage (1:1-18:27; from Egypt and through the Sea)

Sanctification by the Law (19:1-24:18)

Worship via the Tabernacle (25:1-40:38)

Here we see the topics of the book to be: the Passover, the Ten Commandments, and the Tabernacle.

2A. Theme: from the contents, we get our theme statement: fulfilling His covenant, God gives the descendents of Abraham redemption unto the law for tabernacle worship.

## 3A. Overview

### 1B. Salvation (chapters 1-18)

Salvation means deliverance. Because of the oppression by the Pharaoh who knew nothing about Joseph, the Israelites are "oppressed with forced labor" (1:11-14). Deliverance will come through Moses who is raised by Pharaoh's daughter and trained by his Hebrew mother. His training made him sensitive about the treatment of his own people but foolishly he took the violent road and "killed an Egyptian and hid him in the sand" (2:12). He flees across the desert to Midian (East of the Red Sea past the Sinai peninsula) for "a long period" (2:23; some 40 years). During this long period, Israel groaned in their slavery, God heard, and God remembered his covenant (2:23-25).

Then God called Moses and prepared him to be "God's human agent of deliverance" (*IOT* 63) in chapters 3-4.

Conflict escalates in chapters 5-18. It culminates through ten plagues with the slaying of the firstborn of Egypt and the destruction of the Egyptian army in the Sea (cf. 12:29-30 and 14:26-28). God brought Israel out of Egypt (12:51; 20:2) and led them to the Red Sea (13:18). God "hurled" Pharaoh's army into the sea (15:3-4). With "unfailing love" He will lead His redeemed people (15:13).

## 2B. Sanctification (chapters 19-24)

Chapter 19 records the consecration and ceremonial cleansing of the people because now they will be "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (19:6).

In 20-24 the ten commandments are given and specific applications of the ten are explicated. The ten words divide into two parts (the first 4 and the last 6 commands). These cover various relationships:

divine-human 1-4

divine-human-human 6-10

The explication sections "specify the Ten Commandments to the cultural and redemptive-historical moment of the people of God at the time of the Exodus. For instance, the law of the goring ox (Ex 21:28-36) is a specification of the sixth commandment to an agrarian society and Exodus 23:10-13 spells out more fully the fourth commandment concerning the Sabbath" (*IOT* 67). Notably, the Law is not the basis of salvation, deliverance or redemption. The redeemed are brought out of slavery by the covenant keeping grace of God (2:24).

God has not been known as covenant keeper by them in any way like the present shall unfold (Ex. 6:2-5). Exodus 6.3 does not mean that God never revealed Himself as covenant Lord (Yahweh) before this time (cf. Gen 14.22). "By my name the Lord I did not make myself known to them" means "in covenant realization like is about to occur." In the conflict with Egypt, God will manifest Himself as Yahweh in such a distinctive way and to such a marked degree as to eclipse His former revelations.

Revealing His name means to reveal His character. He is "I am" (Ex. 3:14), the eternally self-existing and self-determining God in all His majesty, absolute independence, and freedom. We call him Yahweh, we say of Him that "He is." He says of Himself, "I am." Who He is, who Yahweh is, is focused in Exodus 33:19: He is Yahweh, one who is gracious to whom He will be gracious, showing compassion on whom He wills to show compassion. Because He is self-determining and independent of everything outside of Himself, the bestowal of grace and compassion arises from within God and is not determined by outside influences. "Yahweh" accents His sovereignty, that He acts with unfettered freedom (Vos, OTBT, 134). The covenant keeping God is sovereign Lord.

Sovereignty will be displayed with regard to the Egyptians, the Pharaoh, and the Israelites. God made a difference between the Egyptians and the Israelites through the plagues, especially the last one (Ex. 11:4-7) revealing that He judges whom He will.

Likewise, God hardened Pharaoh's heart (9:12, 16; He hardens whom He will, so deduced by Paul in Rom 9:18; here we have a use of free deduction exemplified by Paul in his reading of Ex 9:12 (Is there is an OT "hardens whom He will passage?"). Consider the illustration that the sun hardens the clay and melts the wax. The clay will only be softened if some other influence enters the picture like moisture picturing the mercy of God added to the brilliance of his justice; such mercy is sovereignly, selectively, and freely given (Ex. 6:7, I will take you as my own). Israel is unworthy (6:9) but God will act. God did not ask them if they would let Him deliver them. Note there is no "may I be your God" or "if you please" but a simple "I will." Therefore, they will be His people.

The law is not the basis of salvation (*IOT* 67). Instead, the redeemed are freed *for* law keeping; they are *not* freed *by* law keeping. "The law is not just an appendage or separate part of the book but flows within the history of redemption" (*IOT* 64).

### 3B. Worship (chapters 25-40)

The people of God who are freed from bondage and governed by the Law are a people of worship; true gratitude will entail reverent fellowship with God. Fellowship with God is why the tabernacle is important with all its minute details. They are brought out of bondage to the law for a life of worship (cf. the three divisions of the book).

The tabernacle is the place of God's presence with His people. Since the fall, access to God has been restricted. Because of our sin, we are alienated from God (we are His enemy and He is our enemy). But God has a plan of restoration, of return to fellowship.

Thus, though Israel is the people of God, she must learn holiness under the Law and experience cleansing as a means of access to God. So, God chooses to dwell as king in the midst of the nation in the tabernacle with levels of holiness moving higher from the people to the Levites, to the priests, and to the high priest (note how OT the catholic church is in this regard).

### 4A. Message

"God is present with Israel as its savior and king" (*IOT* 64). In modern terms, God is with us as our savior and king or sovereign.

1) He calls us out from our bitter bondage in sin as expressed by Wesley: "Long my imprisoned spirit lay fast bound in sin and nature's night. Thine eye diffused a quickening ray; I woke; the dungeon flamed with light; my heart was free; I rose went forth and followed thee."

Like the Israelites, we were very stiffnecked and sinful, but He shows mercy upon whom He wills to show mercy; we are saved by sovereign, covenant grace.

2) God tabernacles with us in this saving fashion because a firstborn son, that is, a preeminent son was slain in our place. Jesus is our Passover (I Cor. 5:7); communion is the Christian Passover meal. He is the firstborn son who is judged; He is the lamb that is slain; He is the meal that is eaten and by which we are nourished unto eternal life.

Jacob's ladder is extended from earth to heaven by the firstborn son and Passover lamb; Jesus again is seen as our Bethel, the gate of heaven, the place of the presence of God.

3) We are called to the law. We are not justified *by* it, we are justified *for* it (Rom. 8:3 that the righteousness of the law may be fulfilled in us). Jesus brings us to the mount and explains the law in its true spirit and intent (in the Sermon on the Mount, Mat 5-7). The blessed man, the Christian, hungers and thirsts for righteousness (Matt. 5:6); righteousness is defined by the law (Matt. 5:17-20). The Ten Commandments are ten guiding principles for the Christian. They are to be studied and contemplated in order to be lived. They define the holy life of a holy people. Keeping them is a matter of gratitude and love to the Lord Jesus (if you love me you will keep my commandments, Jn. 14:15).