

The Essence
of the **Old**
Testament:
A Survey



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Ed Hindson

Gary Yates

Editors



ACADEMIC

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Essence of the Old Testament: A Survey

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Chapter 7

EXODUS

Exit from Egypt

The book of Exodus tells a dramatic tale of faith, hope, and love. It is also a story of betrayal, slavery, emancipation, and liberation. Its images are so powerful they are quoted more than 120 times in the Hebrew Bible. Exodus is the story of the Israelites' exit from bondage in Egypt. It is a narrative account of the history of the descendants of Jacob (Israel) from the death of Joseph in c. 1806 BC (Exod 1:1–7) until the construction of the tabernacle in the wilderness in 1446 BC (Exod 40:17). The account includes the years of Israel's bondage and servitude in Egypt, the call of Moses, the confrontation with Pharaoh, the dramatic events of the exodus, and Israel's arrival at Mount Sinai to receive the law from Jehovah (Yahweh) God.

Exodus is also the story of God's love for His people. Yahweh is not an aloof, inactive, functionless deity. He sees, hears, observes, and cares about the struggles



The smallest of the three pyramids at Giza, built by Mycerinus (Menkaure).

of His people (Exod 3:7). He is an intensely involved, vitally concerned, moral being who demands that His creatures reflect His moral attributes. Jewish scholar Nahum Sarna observes: “History, therefore, is the arena of divine activity. . . . The nation is the product of God’s providence, conditioned by human response to His demands.”¹ The God who revealed Himself to the patriarchs is the same God who revealed Himself to Moses and called him to lead the people in the exodus. The time had come to fulfill God’s promise to Abraham (Gen 15:13) in an incredible display of His covenant faithfulness.

The Hebrew title of the book is *ve’alleh shemoth* (“and these are the names”), which comes from the book’s opening words. The English title, Exodus, comes from the LXX Greek title, *Exodos*. Interestingly, the same Greek word as used in the LXX title is also used in Luke 9:31 and 1 Pet. 1:15 to depict “departing, going out” to death.

BACKGROUND

People have vigorously debated the **Mosaic authorship** of the book of Exodus, but several lines of evidence point to Moses as the book’s author. First, the book is interconnected with Genesis. Exodus’s first words seem to pick up where Gen 50:26 left off. Furthermore, Exod 1:1–7 bears resemblance to Gen 46:8–27 in describing Jacob’s family that came to Egypt. Thus, if it is accepted that Moses authored Genesis, then it is likely that Moses authored Exodus. Second, the book of Exodus itself claims that Moses spoke and recorded some of the book’s content (Exod 17:14; 24:4,7; 34:27). Third, the rest of the Old Testament claims Moses as the book’s author (Josh 8:31; Mal 4:4). Fourth, the New Testament indicates that Moses wrote Exodus (Mark 7:10; 12:26; Luke 2:22–23; 20:37; John 1:45; 5:46–47; 7:19,22–23; Rom 10:5). Fifth, extrabiblical material, including the Dead Sea Scrolls (CD 5:1–2; 7:6,8–9; 1 QS 5:15) and the *Babylonian Talmud* (*Baba Bathra* 14b–15a), indicates that Moses authored the book.

The details of the exodus account clearly reflect an **Egyptian**



The famous Sphinx of Giza, built by Chephren (Khafre), measuring 240 feet from front to back.

cultural background, which included the enslavement of foreigners as brick makers, the common use of midwives to deliver babies, the use of birth stools, snake charming by priestly magicians, worship of calf deities such as Apis, the veneration of the Nile River, the reference to the king as Pharaoh (“Great House”), and the occupation of the Egyptian delta by Semites.² The covenant structure and pattern of the Israelite legal system reflected in Exodus clearly indicates a firsthand knowledge of scribal methods, international treaties, and legal terminology typical of the mid-second millennium BC. Kitchen argues convincingly that the content of Exodus can hardly reflect the work of a “runaway rabble of brick-making slaves.”³ Rather, he suggests it is clearly the work of a Hebrew leader who was experienced with the life of the Egyptian court and had a traditional Semitic social background, just as Moses is described in the book of Exodus.

DATE OF THE EXODUS

The date of the book is contingent upon how one dates the exodus event. Hill and Walton correctly observe, “Pinpointing the date of the exodus constitutes one of the major chronological problems of Old Testament study.”⁴ The significance of the exodus date in turn affects the date of the conquest of Canaan, the length of the Judges period, and the credibility of various chronological references in the Old Testament (Judg 11:26; 1 Kgs 6:1). Those holding to the early date (1446 BC) for the exodus identify Thutmose III (1504–1450 BC) as the pharaoh of the oppression and Amenhotep II (1450–1425 BC) as the pharaoh of the exodus. Those preferring the late date (1290 BC) view Ramesses I (1320–1318 BC) and Seti I (1318–1304 BC) as the pharaohs of the oppression and Ramesses II (1304–1237 BC) as the pharaoh of the exodus.

Arguments for the **early date** (1446 BC) are generally based on the following observations:⁵ (1) First Kings 6:1 states the exodus occurred 480 years prior to King Solomon’s fourth year (966 BC), dating the exodus as 1446 BC. (2) Jephthah, in c. 1100 BC, claimed Israel had occupied Canaan for 300 years (Judg 11:26). Adding 40 years for the wilderness journey puts the



The Merneptah Stele that contains the first mention of Israel.

date of the exodus between 1446 and 1400 BC. (3) The Merneptah Stele (c. 1220 BC) refers to “Israel” as an already established people in the land in the record of Ramesses II’s son. This hardly allows time for the exodus, wilderness wandering, conquest, and settlement of Canaan by the Israelites. (4) The Amarna Tablets (c. 1400 BC) refer to a period of chaos in Canaan, which could equate with the Israelite conquest. (5) The Dream Stele of Thutmose IV, who followed Amenhotep II, indicates he was not the firstborn legal heir to the throne, the eldest son having died.

Arguments for the **late date** of the exodus are generally as follows: (1) The biblical years are reinterpreted as symbolic (480 years = 12 generations) or exaggerated generalizations (e.g., Jephthah’s 300 years). (2) No extrabiblical references to “Israel” have been found prior to the Merneptah Stele (c. 1220 BC). (3) Archaeological evidence seems to be lacking for a fifteenth-century BC conquest at some sites in Canaan. (4) The Israelites helped build the cities of Pithom and Rameses (Exod 1:11), which were completed by Ramesses II. (5) Overlapping judgeships in Judges may account for tabulating a shorter period of time for the conquest, settlement, and judges era.



The temple of Ramesses II at Abu-Simbel. The four colossal statues depict the king wearing the double crown signifying his role as ruler over all of Egypt.

The major weakness of the late date view is that it totally discards any literal reading of the biblical chronology in favor of highly debatable and inconclusive archaeological data. It is entirely likely that future excavations will continue to clarify this picture. In the meantime **minimalist critics** discount the entire story of the exodus and conquest as Jewish mythology, making any date for the exodus irrelevant for them. Those who take the biblical account at face value have offered a more than adequate

defense of their position.⁶ The basic laws and religious rituals of Israel were probably shaped over time, but they had to have a beginning at some point in history. Suggesting there never was a Moses involved in the foundation of the nation of Israel would be like arguing there never was a George Washington involved in the founding of America.

Thus, assuming Mosaic authorship and the early date of the exodus, the book was likely written anytime between the two years after the exodus (1444 BC) and Moses' death (1406 BC). The earlier end of this spectrum seems more appropriate since the events described occurred then.

The recipients of the book were the generation of Hebrews who experienced the exodus from Egypt and the covenant at Sinai (17:14; 24:4; 34:27–28) and the subsequent generation that was born in the wilderness.

ROUTE OF THE EXODUS

Scholars have advanced **three theories** as possible explanations for the route of the exodus. First, the *northern theory* places Mount Sinai in the northwestern area of the Sinai. In its favor is the fact that Moses requested a three-day journey (Exod 3:18) and that the northern route is the shortest journey to Kadesh Barnea. However, this theory fails since it keeps Israel close to Egyptian territory, does not consider the 10-day journey between Kadesh and Mount Sinai (Deut 1:2), and does not acknowledge that God led Israel away from the Philistines fortresses along the coast (Exod 13:17).

Second, the *central theory* places Mount Sinai in Arabia (at Jabel-Al Lawz), beyond the gulf of Aqabah, east of the Sinai Peninsula. This view has several ingredients in its favor, such as Paul's indication that Sinai was in Arabia (Gal 4:25), the existence of an active volcano in the area reminiscent of Exod 19:16–25, and the association of Arabia with the Midianites (Exod 3:1; 18:1). However, several reasons have made scholars reticent to embrace this view. Among them are the beliefs that the events of Exod 19:16–25 have more in common with a theophanic divine manifestation rather than a volcanic eruption and that Moses is also related to the Kenites who were a nomadic Midianite clan prevalent in the Sinai region (Judg 1:16; 4:11). Also, it is virtually impossible to reach the crossing point into Arabia in 11 days.⁷

Third, the *southern theory* places Mount Sinai on the southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula. This theory takes into consideration the general direction of the movement of the nation after leaving Egypt. The Lord led Israel from Ramses to Succoth, then from Succoth to Etham on the outskirts of the wilderness (Exod 13:20). After Israel camped at Pi-hahiroth (14:2), she then entered the wilderness of Shur in the northwest of the Sinai Peninsula (Exod 15:22; Num 33:8). It is also worth noting that Christian tradition dating back to the fourth century AD has associated Jebel Musa or Mount Horeb with the same Mount Sinai where Moses received the covenant. Whichever of these three views the interpreter holds, dogmatism should be avoided since new archaeological discoveries are constantly being made adding new light to the subject.⁸



MESSAGE

The book of Exodus focuses on **Moses' life** which can be divided into three 40-year time periods. They include the period from his birth and his rearing as a prince of Egypt (Acts 7:23), the time he spent in Midian as a shepherd (Exod 7:7), and the time he spent as leader of the exodus in the wilderness (Acts 7:36). The book of Exodus covers the first two of these periods and introduces the third period. Exodus also uses three dominant **genres**. The first type is narrative. The second type is psalm or hymn, found in the song of Moses (Exodus 15), which probably represents the first psalm in the entire Old Testament. The third type is law (Exodus 20–24). Most agree that the Decalogue (20:1–17) represents *apodictic* law while the book of the covenant (20:22–23:33) represents *casuistic* law. Apodictic law involves affirmative or prohibitive statements while casuistic law is couched in “if . . . then” language in an attempt to cover various hypothetical situations.

Outline

- I. Exodus from Egyptian Bondage (Exodus 1–18)
 - A. Redemption (Exodus 1:1–12:30)
 - B. Liberation (Exodus 12:31–15:21)
 - C. Preservation (Exodus 15:22–18:27)
- II. Instruction for the Redeemed Nation (Exodus 19–40)
 - A. Offer of the Covenant (Exodus 19)
 - B. Covenant Text (Exodus 20–23)
 - C. Covenant Ratification Ceremony (Exodus 24)
 - D. Tabernacle of Worship (Exodus 25–40)

I. Exodus from Egyptian Bondage (Exodus 1–18)

The first half of the book involves **God's redemption** of His elect nation Israel from Egyptian servitude (chaps. 1–18). God accomplished this feat in the following three phases: redemption (1:1–12:30), liberation (12:31–15:21), and preservation (15:22–18:27). Moses begins by providing information concerning why redemption was necessary (1:1–22).

A. Redemption (Exodus 1:1–12:30)

After Jacob's descendants migrated into Egypt, the Israelites began to experience numerical growth (1:1–7) as promised by the Abrahamic covenant (Gen 13:16).⁹ Following Joseph's death, a Pharaoh arose who did not know Joseph.¹⁰ Threatened by the growing Jewish population, he **subjugated the Hebrew race** (1:8–14). Another attempt to reduce Israel's population was through the practice of infanticide (1:15–22).

The next major section (1:8–12:30) focuses on the **human instrument** God used to accomplish Israel's redemption from Egypt (chaps. 2–4). The book records Moses' supernatural guidance to Pharaoh's household and the rearing he received there (2:1–10). Some believe Moses got his name from the word “mose” found in Thutmose as a



potential future pharaoh. However, according to 2:10, his name comes from the fact that the princess drew him from the water. In Hebrew his name means “to draw forth,” and in Egyptian it means “son of the water.”¹¹ If Thutmosis I was in power when Moses was born, it is possible that Hatshepsut, or someone like her, was the princess who took him as her son. Hatshepsut, the royal widow of Thutmosis II, ruled as pharaoh without a male heir from 1504 to 1482 BC.

However, as Moses grew into adulthood, his spiritual immaturity became apparent through his rash decision to kill an Egyptian. In preparation for His task as deliverer, it was necessary for God to train His servant an additional 40 years in the **wilderness of Midian**, the place he would later lead the Israelites for 40 years. Thus, Moses’ flight from Pharaoh was just one more step in the divine plan that would eventually lead to the fulfillment of His covenant promises



Sunrise over the Nile from Minia.

to Israel (2:23–25; Gen 15:16). The Midianites were a confederacy of seminomadic tribes stretching from the Sinai Peninsula up through the Syro-Arabian desert. Genesis 25:2 traces their lineage back to Abraham through Keturah. Moses’ father-in-law Jethro (3:1), also called Ruel (2:18), was the priest of Midian.

The turning point in the first phase of the book came when Moses encountered God at the **burning bush** (3:1–10). The Lord told Moses He was concerned about His people and therefore He announced, “I have come down to rescue them” (3:8) adding, “I am sending you to . . . lead My people out of Egypt” (3:10). Overwhelmed with the magnitude of the task, Moses offered God five reasons why he was not the man for the job. However, God answered each objection (3:11–4:13) with the promise of miraculous manifestations in Egypt (4:1–9). In the process God revealed Himself as “I AM WHO I AM” (3:14). “The term I AM is the first person form of the Hebrew verb *hayah*, ‘to be.’ The name implies that God is the Self-Existent One.”¹² The name was written as YHVH (יהוה) and is generally vocalized as Yahweh (KJV, Jehovah). The divine name is so sacred to the Jews that they do not pronounce it, generally substituting *ha shem* (“the name”) or *’adonai* (Lord).

The book moves on to discuss the actual **redemption of the nation** (5:1–12:30). In this section the author shows how God redeemed Israel by demonstrating His sovereignty over the Egyptian pantheon that was holding the nation in bondage. Yahweh’s request to release His firstborn son, Israel, eventually resulted in the death of the first-born Egyptians in the tenth plague. Moses’ first encounter with Pharaoh explains why a miraculous display of God’s power over the Egyptian pantheon would be necessary. Both Pharaoh and God were claiming sovereignty over Israel. After Moses made the initial request (5:1–3), Pharaoh responded with stubbornness and even increased

Israel's workload (5:14–19). The prediction of God's hardening of Pharaoh (4:21) represents a divine judgment against someone who was already self-hardened. Exodus shows Pharaoh repeatedly hardening his own heart (7:13,22; 8:15,19,32; 9:7). Not until the sixth plague did God harden Pharaoh's heart (9:12).

The **10 plagues** that God poured out on Egypt were designed to discredit the forces of nature the Egyptians worshipped (7:14–12:31). Through this process God showed that His claim to sovereignty over Israel was superior to the claim of sovereignty asserted by Pharaoh. The plagues increased in intensity until Pharaoh's self-will was broken through the death of his firstborn. The end result of the plagues was the liberation of Israel from the illegitimate control of Pharaoh to the legitimate jurisdiction of Yahweh. Some deny the miraculous nature of these plagues, instead attributing them to the normal flood cycle of the Nile. However, the miraculous nature of the plagues is seen in how Moses knew about them beforehand (8:10; 9:5,29), their instantaneous appearance, their instantaneous termination, their description as "signs and wonders" (7:3), their intensification, their timing, their accomplishment of a moral purpose (11:1), the response they invoked from the Egyptian sorcerers (7:22; 8:18–19), and how the last seven plagues did not affect the Hebrews living in Goshen (9:6).

Given the context of the story, the 10 plagues were intended to show Yahweh's superiority over the **gods of Egypt**. Possible parallels include:

PLAGUE	EGYPTIAN DEITY	REFERENCE
1. Water to Blood	Osiris, Hapi, Khnum	Exod 7:14–25
2. Frogs	Heqt, frog deity	Exod 8:1–15
3. Mosquitoes	Seb	Exod 8:16–19
4. Flies	Kephra and Uatchit	Exod 8:20–32
5. Cattle	Typhon and Imhotep	Exod 9:1–7
6. Boils	Hathor and Apis	Exod 9:8–12
7. Hail	Serapis and Isis	Exod 9:13–35
8. Locusts	Seth, protector of crops	Exod 10:1–20
9. Darkness	Ra, sun deity	Exod 10:21–29
10. Death of Firstborn	Ptah, god of life	Exod 11:1–12:36

The climax to the account of the plagues was the **Passover** (12:1–4). During the tenth plague the "death angel" passed over Egypt, claiming the lives of the firstborn, including Pharaoh's son. To escape this plague, the Israelites were instructed to slaughter an unblemished lamb, spread its blood on their doorposts, roast the lamb, and eat it along with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. This meal (*pesach*) was the prelude to the exodus. Their faith became the basis of the nation's redemption from Egypt. Thus, God mandated that Israel celebrate the Passover Feast throughout the generations in commemoration of this important event (12:1–14). Because Israel was to leave Egypt immediately and because it took time for bread to rise, the Hebrews were to remove

the leaven from their households. Thus, God also mandated that Israel celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread (*matstsoth*) throughout the generations to commemorate the speed in which redeemed Israel left Egypt (12:15–20). Jesus shed His blood for our redemption at the time of Passover (John 19:14), fulfilling John the Baptist’s statement, “Here is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29).¹²

B. Liberation (Exodus 12:31–15:21)

After Pharaoh finally gave Israel permission to leave Egypt (12:31–36), the redeemed nation journeyed from Rameses to Succoth (12:37–42). This was the first major move of the nation after 430 years of bondage in Egypt (12:40). The Lord instructed Israel regarding the **consecration of the firstborn** once they arrived in Canaan (13:1–16). The dedication of the firstborn symbolized God’s redemption of His own firstborn son, the nation of Israel (4:22–23). Thus, both the Passover Feast as well as the ceremony involving the consecration of the firstborn served as signs testifying to the special status of God’s redeemed nation.

Although the nation was redeemed, her liberation was not yet totally complete as evidenced by Pharaoh’s pursuing army (14:3–14). However, God accomplished the nation’s complete liberation from Egypt by allowing Israel miraculously to pass through the **Red Sea** (14:15–22) and by drowning the pursuing Egyptian army (14:23–31). The nation then celebrated its liberation by singing the famous *Song of the Sea* (15:1–21).



Ancient Egyptian mummy case.

C. Preservation (Exodus 15:22–18:27)

Now that Israel’s redemption (1:1–12:30) and liberation from Egypt (12:31–15:21) were accomplished, the book of Exodus focuses on Israel’s miraculous preservation in the wilderness (15:22–18:27). God’s **miraculous provisions** included guidance to the oasis at Elim (15:22–27) and the provision of manna (Hb. *man hu*’, “what is it?”) to feed the people. Despite these provisions, this section (15:22–18:27) routinely characterizes the nation as grumbling, unbelieving, and disobedient. Although they were elect (4:22–23) and redeemed (12:21–30), they still needed further guidance regarding how to live the sanctified life. Such guidance was provided in the Mosaic covenant (chaps. 19–40).

II. Instruction for the Redeemed Nation (Exodus 19–40)

At this point in the book, God is the sovereign who has control over the nation of Israel. Several questions logically follow. How is this newly redeemed nation to conduct itself toward God, toward one another, and toward the rest of the world? These questions are answered through the provision of the **Mosaic covenant** (chaps. 19–40). The Mosaic covenant explains how the nation was to be organized under God’s kingship. This covenant was not given to redeem people. The nation was already elect (4:22–23), redeemed (12:21–30), and walking by faith (14:31). Rather, the covenant taught them how redeemed people are to live in this world.



Jebel Musa, the traditional site of Mount Sinai, in the southern Sinai Peninsula.

A. Offer of the Covenant (Exodus 19)

After Israel traveled from Rephidim to the foot of Mount Sinai (19:1–2), God explained that Israel would become a **holy nation** and a **kingdom of priests** if they accepted the covenant and adhered to its terms (19:3–6). Thus, the Mosaic covenant offered the nation the opportunity to be the vessel through which God would transmit His redemptive purposes to the rest of mankind. After Israel accepted God’s offer of the covenant (19:7–8), the nation then consecrated itself to God (19:9–15) as God manifested Himself to Moses on Mount Sinai (19:16–25) in preparation for giving the covenant text (chaps. 20–23).

B. Covenant Text (Exodus 20–23)

The covenant text (chaps. 20–23) spells out the obligations Israel must meet to allow the suzerain (God) to bless the vassal (Israel). The covenant text consists of the Decalogue (Ten Commandments, 20:1–21) and the book of the covenant (20:22–23:33). The Decalogue is the foundational covenant text while the book of the covenant spells out how the Decalogue is to be applied in the everyday life of the nation.

The first four of the **Ten Commandments** pertain to the individual's relationship to God while the remaining six pertain to how members of the community are to relate to one another. The book of the covenant (20:22–23:33) explains how the Decalogue is applied in daily life in the areas of idolatry (20:22–26), slavery (21:1–11), bodily injuries (21:12–36), property rights (22:1–17), moral and civil obligations (22:18–23:9), Sabbath and feasts (23:10–19), and the impending conquest (23:20–33). If Israel obeyed the covenant stipulations and maintained her relationship with God, she would then become distinct among the nations and would experience the covenant blessings.

Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1–17)

Responsibilities to maintain their relationship with God

1. "No other gods" vs. polytheism
2. "Do not make an idol" vs. idolatry
3. "Do not misuse the name" vs. profanity
4. "Remember the Sabbath" vs. secularism

Responsibilities to maintain their relationship with other people

5. "Honor your father and mother" vs. rebellion
6. "Do not murder" vs. murder
7. "Do not commit adultery" vs. adultery
8. "Do not steal" vs. theft
9. "False testimony" vs. lying
10. "Do not covet" vs. materialism

C. Covenant Ratification Ceremony (Exodus 24)

The various items spoken of in this chapter, such as duplicate copies of the covenant text (24:3–4,12), the vassal's verbal commitment to follow the terms of the covenant (24:3), the sprinkling of the altar with blood (24:4–8), and the meal between the covenant parties (24:9–11) are all germane to ancient Near East covenant ratification ceremonies.¹³

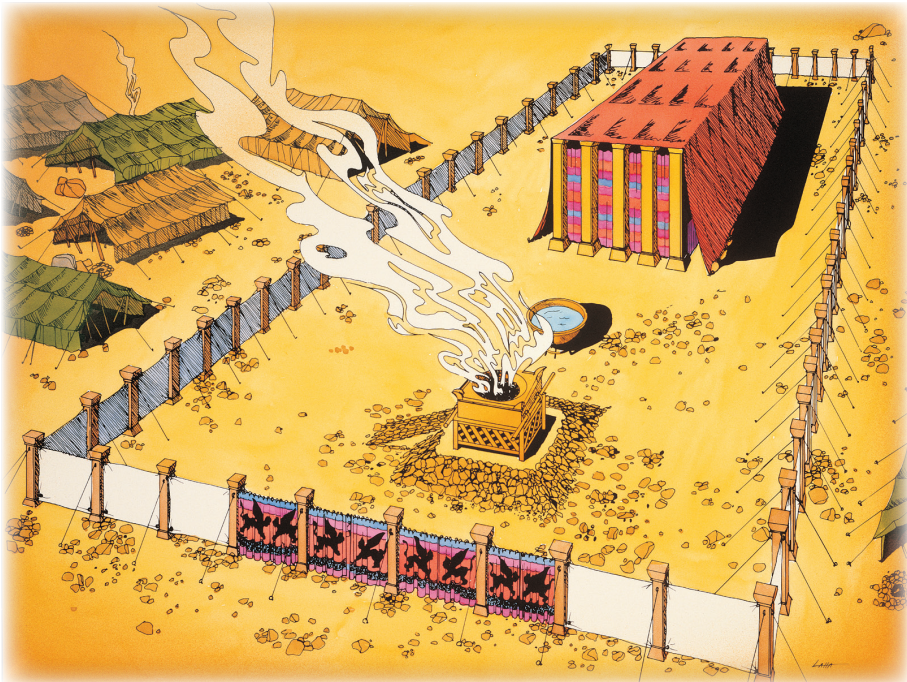
D. Tabernacle of Worship (Exodus 25–40)

The construction of the **tabernacle** (*mishkan*) represented how God was to dwell among His people and how the nation's fellowship with God was to be restored after sin. The Tabernacle was to be created according to exact divine specifications since it was the place where God would dwell among His people (25:8). The ark of the covenant and mercy seat represented His presence (25:1–22), the table of bread represented His provision (25:23–30), and the lampstand represented His guidance (25:31–40; 27:20–21; 30:22–33).

Of paramount significance was the existence of the **veil** separating the holy place from the most holy place (26:31–35). This veil represented the barrier between holy

God and sinful man (Matt 27:51). The bronze altar where the animal sacrifices were to be offered (27:1–8) illustrated that there was a great divide between God and man. People could only come to a holy God through the atoning work of a sacrifice rather than through their own meritorious works. The single doorway indicated that there was only one way into God's presence, not many ways. The description of the priesthood (chaps. 28–29) explained how certain elements were necessary before any person could approach God. The existence of the laver (30:17–21) communicated that a person must be cleansed both physically and spiritually before approaching God.

The altar of incense helped people understand the importance of worship and prayer (30:1–10,34–38). The annual half-shekel tax to be paid for the purpose of



Reconstruction of the Israelite tabernacle and its court. The court was formed by curtains attached to erect poles. In front of the tent was placed the altar of burnt offerings and the laver. The tabernacle was always erected to face the east, so this view is from the northeast.

supporting the tabernacle activity reminded the people that worship of Yahweh was obligatory rather than voluntary (30:11–16). The concluding exhortation to keep the Sabbath (31:12–17) connected the tabernacle description to the Mosaic covenant. God gave Moses the covenant tablets at the conclusion of His tabernacle instructions (31:18). Thus, the tabernacle instructions represented the part of the Mosaic covenant that taught the redeemed nation how to worship God, how God would dwell among them, and how the nation's fellowship with God could be restored when they sinned.

Hebrew Highlight

Dwelling. Hebrew מִשְׁכָּן (*mishkan*). The Hebrew word translated “tabernacle” (Exod 26:1) is *mishkan*, meaning “dwelling” or “residence” and comes from the root word *shakan*, “to dwell.” The “tents” or “dwellings” can refer to human dwellings (Num 16:24) or the divine dwelling place (Ps 43:3). The term is used 58 times in Exodus. The tabernacle as constructed in Exodus was the special place where God dwelt among His people. God’s presence with His people in the tabernacle (chaps. 25–40) is comparable to Christ’s presence with believers in the New Testament. Through the use of the Greek verb *skenoō*, John used the tabernacle as an analogy for Christ’s incarnation (John 1:14). In other words, in His incarnation Christ dwelt or “tabernacled” among men.

The events of the next three chapters (32–34) represent a **threat** to the covenant. Aaron led the people in a repudiation of the first two commandments (32:1–10). Because of the covenant’s bilateral nature, the sinful behavior of the Hebrews jeopardized the covenant. This event sets the stage for the eventual giving of the new covenant where God promises that such rebellion will be curtailed since He will write His laws on the hearts of His people (Jer 31:31–34). However, after Moses interceded for (32:11–14, 30–35), confronted (32:15–24), and purified the nation (32:25–29), the people repented (33:1–6), and consequently the nation was spared from divine wrath and total annihilation (32:10).

The instructions for building of the tabernacle (35:1–39:31) and inspecting it (39:32–43) were given to Moses. Upon noting that the tabernacle was built according to the precise divine instructions, it was then erected (40:1–33) and indwelt by God (40:34–38). The presence of **God’s glory** (*kabod*) represented His personal presence with His people. In conclusion God emancipated Israel (chaps. 1–18) from Egyptian servitude by redeeming (1:1–12:30), liberating (12:31–15:21), and preserving (15:22–18:27) His elect nation. The Mosaic covenant (chaps. 19–24) taught redeemed Israel how they were to relate to God, one another, and the rest of the world as His special kingdom of priests. The tabernacle instructions and construction (chaps. 25–40) explained to the redeemed nation how they were to worship God, who now dwelt among them.



THEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE

The book of Exodus is foundational to both Jewish and Christian theology. Arnold and Beyer state, “The exodus as a salvation event was the formative beginning of the

nation of Israel historically and theologically.”¹⁴ It illustrates how God is the **Redeemer** from injustice, sin, and oppression and thus serves as a paradigm for all future redemption. Exodus teaches us that God is sovereign over His creation and that human beings cannot ultimately defy His will or limit His purposes. As the great **Liberator**, Yahweh sets His people free to worship and serve Him. He is also the source of the Judeo-Christian ethical system, which is summarized in the Ten Commandments. Jesus affirmed the validity of the law (Matt 22:36–40) and claimed that He had come to fulfill it (Matt 5:17). He even referred to His “departure” or death on the cross as an *exodus* (Luke 9:31).

For Further Reading

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- Davis, John J. *Moses and the Gods of Egypt*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998.
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- Motyer, Alec. *The Message of Exodus*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2005.
- Sarna, Nahum. *Exploring Exodus*. New York: Schocken Books, 1986.

Study Questions

1. How did God use Moses’ background to prepare him to confront the pharaoh of Egypt?
2. What is the significance of the divine name I AM?
3. How does the Passover prefigure Christ’s death for us?
4. How do the Ten Commandments form the basis of the Judeo-Christian ethic?
5. How does the tabernacle symbolically picture our relationship to God?
6. What is God teaching you about the importance of worship?

ENDNOTES

1. Nahum Sarna, *Exploring Exodus* (New York: Schocken Books, 1986), 1.
2. Randall Price, *The Stones Cry Out* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1997), 125–40; K. A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 241–312.
3. Kitchen, *Reliability*, 295.
4. Andrew E. Hill and John H. Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 105.
5. *Ibid.*, see charts 106–7.
6. See detailed discussions cf. J. M. Miller and J. H. Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986); contra, Bryant Wood, “Did the Israelites Conquer Jericho?” *BAR* (September-October 1990), 45–69; William Dever, “How to Tell an Israelite from a Canaanite,” *Recent Archaeology in the Land of Israel*, ed. H. Shanks (Washington, DC: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1985), 35–41.
7. Gordon Franz, “Is Mount Sinai in Saudi Arabia?” *Bible and Spade* 13 (4):101–13.
8. For example, see Lennart Möller, *The Exodus Case* (Copenhagen: Scandinavia, 2002).
9. Genesis 46:26 says that 66 people entered Egypt while Exod 1:5 places the number at 70. However, the Genesis text omits Joseph, Joseph’s two sons Ephraim and Manasseh, and Jacob (see Gen 46:27). While the LXX, Acts 7:14, and a Qumran document list the number at 75, this number probably includes Joseph’s three grandsons and two great-grandsons who are mentioned in Numbers 26 (see Gen 46:26 in the LXX where these names are added); Gleason L. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody, 1996), 238.
10. Joseph died at the end of the Twelfth Dynasty. The decline of the Twelfth Dynasty led to the chaotic reign of the Asiatic Hyksos. Later, native Egyptians overthrew the Hyksos. These events ushered in the Eighteenth Dynasty of the New Kingdom period. This regime oppressed Israel. Its founder, Ahmose I (1570–1546), oppressed the chosen people since he viewed them as pro-Hyksos agents. Charles Dyer and Gene Merrill, *Old Testament Explorer: Discovering the Essence, Background, and Meaning of Every Book in the Old Testament* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 43–44.
11. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, 236–37; Kitchen, *Reliability*, 297, believes the name is of Hebrew origin but was vocalized *Masu* in Egyptian. Sarna, *Exploring Exodus*, 33, believes the name was Egyptian in origin.
12. J. Carl Laney, *Answers to Tough Questions from Every Book of the Bible: A Survey of Problem Passages and Issues* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010), 30.
13. See Brant Pitre, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 2011).
14. For a comparison with the six elements of the contemporary Hittite suzerain-vassal treaty structure with the mosaic covenant, see M. Kline, *Treaty of the Great King* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963).
15. Bill Arnold and Bryan Beyer, *Encountering the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 111.