

# Exodus<sup>1</sup>

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## Authorship

Internal evidence suggests that Moses wrote Exodus. Eyewitness details including the numbering of fountains and trees (Ex 15:27) as well as the tasting of manna (11:7-8) promote Mosaic authorship. The author continually pointed out natural characteristics distinctive to Egypt including flora, weather patterns, animals and geography. The atmosphere of Exodus through Number is intertwined into the detail of the storyline indicating a specific audience relative only to a people on a move through unfamiliar desert territory. The writer provides customs unique to Moses time including begetting of children by handmaids and the validity of an oral deathbed will.

The unity of Torah further indicates a single author. While some question that Moses wrote Exodus as well as the Pentateuch<sup>2</sup>, conservative theologians note ample evidence for concluding that Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible.<sup>3</sup>

## Date

Moses wrote Exodus sometime during his forty year leadership of Israel through their wilderness journey.<sup>4</sup>

There is strong biblical evidence that suggest that the exodus took place around 1446 BC. This date is arrived by considering 1 Kings 6:1 which dates the exodus as 480 years prior to the dedication of Solomon's temple in 966 BC an accepted benchmark of time. Judges 11:26 demands that Israel was in Canaan some 300 years during Jephthah's judgeship which obviously began some period before Saul's rule which is dated at 1050 BC. Paul indicated that from the

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<sup>1</sup> Exodus which means "departure" is given to this book by the LXX. The Hebrew Bible titles this book from the first two words within the actual text ... וְאֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת ("these are the names").

<sup>2</sup> Under this theory it is promoted that portions of the Pentateuch labeled J were written around 850BC. "J" supposedly written by an ethical Judean scribe refers not only to prophet like passages but also of those which speak of men with vividness and of God in anthropomorphic terms. According to this theory "E" written by a Northern Scribe around 750 BC with less concern for theological matters and supposedly providing more objective material by recording dreams and visions. "D"

<sup>3</sup> This author has provided sufficient notes concerning JEDP under his "Genesis" notes.

<sup>4</sup> I believe that the book was written very early during the Exodus period. First, there is the overall structure of the book as it focuses upon the Exodus event detailing immediate subsequent events and then abruptly ending with the filling of the tabernacle. This structure indicates close association with the event. Secondly, the Mosaic Covenant becomes a foundational element to Jewish Society within the whole of the forty year period. Third, the fact that Judaism in its foundation was "Word" oriented supports a quick written record. Fourth, God's extraordinary provision of the written Decalogue to Moses, supports an early Exodus documentation. Such important commands given to a person who could write supports the conclusion that he did so and quickly in order to correctly and effectively impact such a large group of people. Fifth, the last chapter specifically announces that Israel erected the tabernacle in the second year of the journey. Sixth, the book of Deuteronomy is presented with direct challenges to Israel's second generation. His encouragement uses the previous generation's freedom and failure as a motivation for continued success. It seems reasonable to assume, given this fact, that the Book of Exodus would have been circulated and well known by this time.

exodus (1446BC) through the time of Samuel (about 996) about 450 years had transpired (Acts 13:16-20).

Although this 1446 BC dating of the exodus has strong support within scripture, many hold that the exodus took place around 1290BC. The following support for this argument is provided by Lasor, Hubbard and Bush.<sup>5</sup> 1) Since the “Israel stele” Merneptah indicates victory over several entities in Canaan around 1209, the exodus must have taken place around this time. 2) According to Exodus 11:1 Israelite slaves built the store cities of Pithon and Raamses therefore the Exodus must have taken place after the famous builder Raamses II around 1300 BC. 3) Egyptian documents historically parallel with Israel provide evidence of a circa 1300’s exodus. Texts from the time of Merneptah and Rameses II illustrate the use of Hebrews in their projects. 4) A 1290BC Exodus fits well within the Hyksos dynasty and the Joseph narrative 430 years earlier (Ex 12:40).

While evidence is presented for both sides, I think that a 1446BC provides the most plausible date for the exodus.<sup>6</sup> Given a 1446BC as well as my footnoted comments previously I date the book of Exodus around 1445-4BC.

## Recipients

Moses wrote this book to that group of people who left Egypt and crossed the Red Sea.

## Purpose

On the outset it is easily noted that Moses wrote with a historical purpose. First, he prepared an orderly record of the exodus including a tracing of their journey (12:37; 17:1) as well as dates (Ex 19:1; 40:17). Second, the obvious need of a public recording concerning the Mosaic Covenant also supports a historical purpose (19-24). So we can conclude that Moses wrote in order to publicly record Israel’s departure for Egypt and subsequent establishment as a covenant worshipping community under the God of Heaven.

A few consistent themes point also to a theological purpose. First, Moses presents all of the main human characters as rebellious including himself (2:23-4:31), the Pharaoh (7:8-15:21) and Israel (5:21; 32:1-35). On the other hand the Divine is presented as a merciful yet holy God. His mercy is demonstrated by his initial concern for Israel bondage (2:23, 24), willingness to call a murderer (2:12; 3:1), subsequent warnings to the pharaoh (7-12),<sup>7</sup> gracious provision of food (15:22-18:27) instruction (19-23) presence (33:9ff) as well as His willingness to renew the covenant (33:1-34:43). Although merciful, His holiness is reaffirmed by Moses’ encounter with God (3:5ff), Moses’ near death experience (4:24), God’s dealing with the Egyptian Pharaoh (7-

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<sup>5</sup> David Allan Hubbard William Sanford LaSor, Frederic Wm. Bush, *Old Testament Survey the Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament*, Second ed.(Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1996). 59-60.

<sup>6</sup> For a detailed discussion concerning this topic consider the following books. Eugene H. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests*(Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987). 58-63.Gleason L. Jr. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*(Chicago: Moody Press, 1994). 239-252.

<sup>7</sup> Some may rightly point to the fact that God was hardening Pharaoh’s heart (9:12; 10:1,20,27; 11:10; 14:8). However the fact that God just doesn’t wipe them out but provides opportunities for a Pharaoh to chose (8:15, 32; 9:34) providing prolonged warnings indicate that God is merciful.

12), Moses' receiving of the covenant (19-23), the detail of the tabernacle and worship system (25;1-31:18), and God's anger concerning the golden calf (32:1-35).

The detail and consistent themes indicate both a historical and theological purpose. Moses not only wrote in order to record God's miraculous deliverance and establishment of the Hebrews as a worshipping community but also to demonstrate that this relationship was based not only on the Hebrew's greatness but on the merciful actions of their holy God.

### **Message**

Exodus records God's deliverance of Abraham's covenant descendants from Egyptian bondage (1-18) as well as their establishment as covenant community under His care (19-40). In the first section (1-18) the Lord hears the petition of his enslaved people and answers their prayers in remembrance of Abraham (2:24). Moses becomes God's reluctant man (3) who is ultimately empowered to deliver Abraham's descendants from the Pharaoh. For an extended time Pharaoh as well as Israel opposed Moses (5-7). However, the God of Abraham showed Himself mighty through Moses and Aaron by sending plagues upon Egypt at the prophet's command. Eventually the beaten Pharaoh permitted the Hebrew departure (7-12). The Pharaoh's submissive attitude didn't last long as he commanded his armies to chase the departing nation. And once again the Lord graciously delivered the Hebrew people through the midst of a sea while their enemies suffered destruction (13-14). God's miraculous deliverance prompted a national celebration (15). Although their celebratory attitude was short lived, the Lord faithfully continued to provide the nation with both water (15), food (16), protection (17), and instruction (18). The first section is a demonstration of God's mighty ability to not only deliver but also provide for the descendants of Abraham.

While the first section marks Israel's deliverance, the second is dedicated to their adoption as a nation under covenant with God (19-40). In the beginning of this relationship, Israel covenanted with God to worship Him alone (19-20). In so doing God provided Israel with instructions concerning their social life (20-23) and religious life (25-31). However, Israel failed in their commitment to worship the Lord alone yielding quick and decisive judgment (32). Afterwards, God graciously renewed His covenant (33-34), the Sabbath (35), tabernacle construction (35-38), and priestly preparation (39) as the temple was completed and the covenant sealed (40).

### **Theme**

Hebrew Deliverance

## Outline of Exodus<sup>8</sup>

### I. The Deliverance of Israel from Bondage 1:1-18:27

A. Prayer for Deliverance 1:1-2:14

B. Provision for Deliverance 2:15-18:27

Midian: Moses Commission 2:14-4:28

Enemy: Egypt Defeated 4:29-15:21

Water: Bitter to Sweet and 12 Springs 15:22-27

**Food: God provides Manna and Quail 16**

Water: Out of a Rock 17:1-7

Enemy: Amalek Defeated 17:8-16

Midian: Moses Accepts Wisdom 18

### II. The Adoption of Israel to Sonship 19:1-40:38

Covenant Delivered 19:1-24:11

Tabernacle Planned 24:12-27:21

Priestly Instructions 28-30

Craftsmen's Directions 31:1-11

Sabbath Instructions 31:12-18

**Covenant Broken 32**

**Covenant Renewed 33-34**

Sabbath Reminded 35

Craftsmen and Construction 35:4-38:31

Priests Prepared 39

Tabernacle Completed 40

Covenant Sealed 40:34-38

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<sup>8</sup> The Basic Structure of this outline is based upon Dorsey's work. David Alden Dorsey *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999).

## Discussion Questions

1. What is the structure of Exodus?
2. What prompted God's intervention for the Hebrew people?
3. In exactly what ways did the Hebrew people serve the Pharaoh?
4. What is the significance of the plagues that God sent upon Egypt?
5. Why did God set out to kill Moses?
6. Describe the Passover meal.
7. Although God delivered a nation, was everyone who participated in the Passover and cross the Red Sea individually "saved?"
8. Name at least three different proposed sites for the crossing.
9. Which crossing site best represents the Biblical data?
10. What are the two proposed dates for the Exodus?
11. What support is maintained for an early exodus of the Israelites?
12. What evidence do we have in order to locate the Mount upon which Moses received the law?
13. What is the role of the Mosaic Covenant within Exodus?

## **Bibliography**

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