

EXODUS

INTRODUCTION

Author. Several statements in Exodus indicate that Moses wrote several sections of the book (17:14, 24:4; 34:27). Beyond this, other Old Testament and New Testament books ascribe Mosaic authorship to passages from Exodus (Joshua 8:31 and Exodus 20:25; Mark 7:10 and Exodus 12:20).

Date. As stated in 1 Kings 6:1, the fourth year of Solomon's reign (966 BC) was 480 years after the Exodus, thus placing the Exodus at 1446 BC. Assuming that Leviticus was necessary for Israel's worship at the Tabernacle and that Exodus is the necessary link between Genesis and Leviticus, it seems reasonable that Exodus was written soon after the events that occurred in 1446 BC.

Audience. As with Genesis, the young nation was presumably about to enter the promised land and needed to understand her relationship to God. This book would fill the nation with confidence as they saw God fulfill His promises.

Structure. The book may be conveniently divided into three major sections, each stressing the fulfillment of a separate stage of God's work. In chapters 1-18, God's work involves redeeming the nation from Egypt and to Himself. This work climaxes when the nation is separated from Egypt and settled at Sinai. Once the separation is accomplished, God's work involves constituting the loosely knit multitude into a nation by the Suzerain/Vassal treaty He establishes with them (19-24). Finally, God instructs the young nation concerning a dwelling place for Him which culminates when he resides with them (25-40).

Message. Exodus records the next step in God's fulfillment of His promises to Eve and Abraham after Genesis. In faithfulness to God's word to Abraham, the message of Exodus is that *the formation of a people to be a nation occurs as God redeems a people, constitutes them into a nation, and dwells among them as their enthroned king.*

ARGUMENT

1A God Acquires a People for Himself 1:1 – 18:27

God delivers the nation twofold: from Egypt and unto Himself. In order to reveal His character as the God who keeps His promises to the patriarchs, He first delivers Israel from Egypt by the plagues. Then with the Passover (chapter 12), the emphasis shifts to God's sustaining grace after Egypt as He leads them to His domain, Sinai, the mountain of God (Exodus 3:1; 19:3).

1B God Introduces Himself and Separates a People From Egypt 1:1 – 11:10

This section emphasizes how God delivers the people from Egypt. They must be released before they can become separated to Him and become a nation. The book first presents the need for deliverance (chapter 1), then introduces Moses, the mediator through whom God will deliver (2-4), and then gives the means by which God delivers the people from Egypt—the plagues (5-11).

1C The need for deliverance: the people are oppressed in Egypt 1:1-22

Moses' introduction to the book immediately identifies the sons of Israel and serves to connect the happenings of Exodus with the promises made to Abraham (Genesis 12:3) and confirmed to Jacob's sons in Genesis. Moses mentions that the Israelites were fruitful and multiplied greatly, an obvious fulfillment of God's promise in Genesis. Thus, Exodus will record the next step in the fulfillment of God's promises to the patriarchs concerning the nation of Israel.

In the midst of Israel's oppression, God uses the Hebrew midwives to protect the children from death and, in turn, blesses the midwives with families. God used two forms of oppression—slavery and extermination of children—to stir up the people's desire to leave Egypt.

2C The introduction of God to the deliverer, Moses 2:1 – 4:31

God's providential care of Moses is evident in the story of his birth and adolescence. Not only is his life preserved, but also his parents are paid to raise him until he can be taken into the royal household.

After a human (and therefore futile) effort to deliver his people, Moses is received by Reuel in the desert, where he makes his home for 40 years. At the end of this time, God remembered his people and commissioned Moses to deliver them. After several questions and objections, Moses finally obeyed and started toward Egypt. On the way, God sought to kill Moses because he failed to circumcise his son. This one who would lead the nation was, by himself, incapable of leading his own family. Therefore, any success which Moses might enjoy was due entirely to God's grace.

3C God separates a people from Egypt through His Mediator 5:1 – 11:10

As God begins to separate a people from Egypt, Moses' efforts are met with resistance from both Pharaoh and Israel. This reaction, however, merely allows God's power to be shown more clearly and His name to be proclaimed even further (9:16).

1D The background 5:1 – 7:7

When Moses confronts Pharaoh the first time, Pharaoh's response is "who is the LORD." The rest of the narrative until chapter eleven is, in large part, the answer to this question. God's direct answer to Moses in 6:1-8 contains the phrase, "I am the LORD" four times. The thrust of God's answer, however, concerns His relation to the patriarchs as their covenant-keeping God. The full answer to Pharaoh's question might be *I am the LORD who will fulfill my promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob by redeeming this people from Egypt and delivering them to the land which I have promised.*

2D God reveals Himself to Israel and Pharaoh 7:8 – 11:10

In three cycles of plagues plus one decisive blow to Egypt, God reveals Himself in an unwanted answer to Pharaoh. He reveals his character as the omnipotent God of Israel as His plagues insult and overcome the supposed domain of several Egyptian deities (12:12). His miracles against the Nile, frogs, the sun, and finally Pharaoh himself as he is left humbled without an heir all serve to reveal what kind of God YHWH is.

2B God Redeems a People to Himself at Sinai 12:1-18:27

With nine of the plagues accomplished, the focus now moves from Egypt to the destination of Sinai. God delivers His "firstborn son," Israel, and all the firstborn of Israel from death through the Passover. He then delivers the people from the Egyptian army through the Red Sea and finally delivers the people from their cravings. In all this, He sustains them until they arrive at Sinai, so that He can constitute them into a nation.

1C God rescues a people from judgment on the firstborn by blood 12:1 – 13:16
God's deliverance of the firstborn was a blessing for those who had faith to obey His warnings. This event constitutes the birth of the nation and is celebrated as the sign of the New Year in Israel. God also commands that the event become a permanent part of the Israelite memory; they must redeem each firstborn son or animal once they enter the land. This temporal condition should have been encouraging as it pointed to God's ultimate intentions for the nation of refugees.

2C God rescues a people to Himself from the bondage of the enemy 13:17 – 15:21
As with the Passover, God's plan and purpose in the Red Sea experience was not simply to deliver His people but also to make His name known (14:5,17,18). This then has the desired effect of enhancing His reputation in the eyes of the people who, in a statement unique to them this far in the narrative, "put their trust in Him." This section appropriately concludes with an extensive song of praise for deliverance.

3C God rescues a people to Himself from their selfish cravings 15:22 – 18:27
The people needed to be delivered from their own cravings as well as from Egypt. Although their need for food and water was legitimate, the people rebelliously complained to Moses about these needs so that God and Moses were moved to anger. The people's requests were really a test of God (17:7).

When the Amalekite armies come against Israel, Moses' intercession is the key to victory, demonstrating that God delivered even though the battle appeared to be merely a struggle against flesh and blood. The episode involving Jethro's advice to Moses serves as a transition to the next major section as Jethro articulates the need to teach the law to all the people.

2A God Constitutes His People into a Nation Through a Suzerain/Vassal Covenant 19:1 – 24:18
By means of a Suzerain/Vassal treaty, God constitutes an amorphous group of people into a defined nation. The covenant advances the connection between God and the people from that of promise to a true relationship of binding responsibility. The covenant offers obedience as the necessary (but not inherently sufficient) means to blessing. With the covenant, God adds the second major element of this book—Law.

1B God Offers a Covenant with the People 19:1-8
God's stated design in offering this covenant was to make Israel His special possession so that they might be His mediator and display His holiness to the world (19:5). This blessing, however, was conditioned upon full obedience (19:5), which Israel could not fulfill in her own strength. As the Law reveals God's character and the responsibility incumbent upon man to live accordingly, it thereby requires a response of humility and faith toward God to fulfill the requirements of the Law. Israel's eagerness to enter into such a relationship only revealed her self-sufficient approach to holiness. If not immediately apparent to the nation, the Law did eventually make plain Israel's spiritual bankruptcy and inability to sustain a relationship with God apart from faith.

2B The Essence of the Covenant with the People 19:9 – 23:33
As God prepared to deliver the content of the covenant to Israel, He appeared upon Mt. Sinai in a frightful display of power that caused the people to tremble. This display helped teach the people of their finiteness before God, but they still failed to recognize their inability to keep the Law and asked instead that God not speak to them directly (20:19).

God delivered the stipulations of the covenant by beginning with a summary, codified in the ten commandments. These summarized the basic bill of rights of the young nation and her king. God then gave a fuller explanation of the Law in Chapters 21-23. The section closes with a reminder of the blessings which attended the nation obedient to the covenant (23:20-33).

3B The Ratification of the Covenant by the People 24:1-18

After hearing a rather detailed exposition of the Law, the people with full knowledge (and therefore culpability) enter into the covenant with God. Moses officially ratifies the contract, and 70 elders as the representatives of the people celebrate a meal and God further confirming their new found relationship with Him. God then summons Moses to the top of the mountain to receive the tangible reminder of the covenant, the tablets of stone.

3A **God Establishes Himself Among His People as King Enthroned in Glory** 25:1 – 40:38

In this final section, God resides as king among the people. He begins by giving detailed plans for the Tabernacle and the priestly garments and service. Through these the nation would learn about their king and their approach to Him. Before the Tabernacle could be constructed, however, the people failed in their obedience and almost forfeited their privilege. By God's grace, he renews the covenant with the people, and they finally enjoy God's enthronement among them when they obey His plans.

1B The Plans Outlined 25:1 – 31:18

While outlining the plans for the Tabernacle, God revealed Himself in at least two ways: through the design of the Tabernacle and through the ministry of the priests. Thus, the plans were designed to teach the people about their God with whom they had just entered into the covenant and how to fellowship with the worship Him.

1C Revelation of the tabernacle 25:1 – 27:21

God reveals here His plans for the objects of the Tabernacle by which He will display Himself independent of the ministry of the priests. God says that He will dwell above and meet with people above the Ark, thus making it symbolic of His throne (25:9,22). The throne contained the tablets which summarized the righteous demands that God places on the men He rules. The table (25:23-30) always bears the shewbread, which symbolized the life support which God's presence gives. The lampstand (25:31-40) symbolized that God's presence enlightens man's life and way.

The Tabernacle, of course, "housed" God and was the place from which God chose to reveal Himself. It served as a model to express the heavenly realities of God's presence, sustenance, guidance, mercy, etc. The purpose of the bronze altar was to expiate sin, and its placement in the outer court sent the message that all who approach God must come by way of the altar. Thus, the first revelation of God which the sinner would have was justice concerning sin and mercy toward the sinner. Finally, God commanded that the lampstand be kept burning continually because enlightenment was always available in God's presence.

2C Revelation of the Aaronic Ministry 28:1 – 31:18

The revelation of the Aaronic ministry details objects and individuals through which man draws near to God. The people are dependent upon the ministry of the priests for this revelation.

The ephod was the basic part of the priestly garment. It was composed of the same material as the veil, symbolizing divine righteousness. However, the ephod has no images of the cherubim, which are associated with the throne. Thus, the High Priest has no portion in the divine rule of the theocracy. A girdle, which gathers the robes and allows work, symbolized his service. The shoulder pieces (28:9-14) carried the collective names (28:15-29) of the sons of Israel upon his shoulders. Because the shoulders bear burdens, the shoulder piece symbolizes the role of the high priest as one who comes before God, bearing the people as his burden.

The urim and thummim were evidently an aid in making decisions for God's people while in the holy place (20:29-30).

The consecration of the priests set them apart to be used in God's service to establish the

relationship between the people and God.

The altar of incense was to be especially attended by Aaron, symbolizing his role of prayer and intercession for the people (30:1-10). The Atonement money financially supported the Tabernacle (30:11-16). The bronze basin for washing, placed between the altar and the tent, reminded Aaron that constant cleansing was necessary whether he was offering sacrifice for the people at the altar or representing them before God in the tent. Finally, unique formulas for both anointing oil and incense were given to remind Israel of the uniqueness of Aaron's service and the Tabernacle.

3C Revelation of the Accomplishment 31:1-18

The people were to understand at least two factors concerning building the Tabernacle. First, it would be accomplished by divine enablement. The Spirit of God filled each of the craftsmen (31:1-11). Second, to construct God's house, they must observe God's rules, particularly concerning the Sabbath (31:12-18).

2B Historical Interlude and Re-establishing the Relationship 32:1 – 34:35

Between outlining the plans to build (25-31) and executing those plans (35-40), a historical interlude demonstrating the people's sinful condition is recorded. This window into their fickle and sinful condition serves as an ominous portent of their chances of fulfilling their portion of the covenant (to willingly obey God). If they cannot live with theocratic awareness until the covenant is delivered, how will they respond after they are fully responsible for obeying the Law?

It is only through the intercession of God's theocratic leader and God's grace that the people survive. God graciously agrees to rewrite the legal copy of the covenant (the two tablets) and begin again with this stiff-necked people.

3B The Construction Accomplished 35:1 – 40:38

After God renewed the covenant, the people construct the Tabernacle. Chapters 35-39 basically repeat the God's original revelation concerning the Tabernacle (25-31). The reason for the detailed repetition (besides the obvious need to record the construction) may be found in Chapters 39:40. Just before the climax of the book when God inhabits His Tabernacle (40:34-38), Moses notes the peoples' and his strict obedience to God's plans with the words "as the LORD commanded" at least nineteen times. Thus, the dwelling of God among His people is initiated upon the necessary (though not sufficient) ground of His peoples' obedience.

Eventually, the Law would expose the self-sufficient attitude of the nation, but at this point, the fulfillment of God's promises to the Patriarchs and to Eve has been considerable. Because of His word to Abraham, God has delivered a people from bondage, constituted them a nation through His covenant, and enthroned Himself among them as their King.

