Synopsis of Exodus

“The book is in two main parts, strikingly depicted in its own words. First, Yahweh delivers Israel from Egypt: ‘You have seen what I did to Egypt and how I bore you upon eagles' wings and brought you to myself’ (19:4). Second, Yahweh gives torah, a moral and ritual constitution for Israel to enable them to realize their unique vocation: ‘So now, if you truly obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my special treasure among all peoples. Although the whole earth is mine, you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation’ (19:5-6).” – Theological Interpretation of the Old Testament, Location 438

“The theme of the book is the commencement of Israel as a covenant nation. It relates how God fulfilled His ancient promise to Abraham by multiplying his descendants into a great nation, redeeming them from the land of bondage, and renewing the covenant of grace with them on a national basis. At the foot of the holy mountain, He bestows on them the promises of the covenant and provides them with a rule of conduct by which they may lead a holy life, and also with a sanctuary in which they may make offerings for sin and renew fellowship with Him on the basis of forgiving grace.” – A Survey of Old Testament Introduction, Pg 235

“Chapters 1–4 describe the circumstances of Moses’ birth and calling. Chapters 5–15 chronicle Moses’ confrontation with Pharaoh, the plagues, and the Exodus itself. Chapters 16–18 tell about the three-month journey to Mount Sinai. Chapters 19–23 detail the initial covenant making at Mount Sinai when the Ten Commandments are given. Chapters 24–31 are about Moses’ forty days on Mount Sinai and the instructions God gives him about the tabernacle. Chapter 32 describes the horrible golden calf incident. Chapters 33–34 present the aftermath of that incident and the renewal of the covenant. And chapters 35–40 conclude with the people’s punctilious obedience to God’s instructions as they build the tabernacle.” – The Message of the Old Testament, Location 1849

Author: Moses (based on tradition)
Time of the exodus: 1445 B.C.

“Chapter 1 of Exodus covers the span of several centuries. Chapter 2 covers about eighty years. And the rest of the book—chapters 3–40—transpires over a little more than one year.” – The Message of the Old Testament, Location 1629

Exodus 1-18 – God Makes His Name Known and Calls His People Out of Egypt

I. Oppression, The God Who Hears, and a Leader Called (1-2)
   a. Key Verses
      i. Continued Fulfillment of God’s Command
Genesis 48:15–16 (ESV) — 15 And he blessed Joseph and said, “The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has been my shepherd all my life long to this day, 16 the angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the boys; and in them let my name be carried on, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.”

Exodus 1:7 (ESV) — 7 But the people of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly; they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land was filled with them.

“The growth of Israel into a people has clear resonances with God's mandate at creation and with his promise to Abraham (Exod. 1:7; cf. Gen. 1:28; 12:2), thus clearly contextualizing all that follows within God's overall purposes for his world” — Theological Interpretation of the Old Testament, Location 451

ii. Attempt to Control God’s People – Exodus 1:22 (ESV) — 22 Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, “Every son that is born to the Hebrews you shall cast into the Nile, but you shall let every daughter live.”

“At the beginning of Exodus we find the descendants of Israel in Egypt having multiplied to become a great crowd of people. The land is now governed by a king who has no regard for the services rendered by Joseph. Rather he sees the Israelites as an internal threat to the security of the nation, and makes them slaves of the state (Ex 1). Once again the reality of the promises of God seems to recede out of reach. Certainly Abraham’s descendants are now many, but they are in the wrong place and under the wrong rule. To all outward appearances Israel’s God is powerless to keep faith with his chosen, and unable to prevent foreign gods from exercising rule over his people.” — According to Plan, Pg. 131

iii. Protection of Israel’s Future Leader – Exodus 2:10 (ESV) — 10 When the child grew older, she brought him to Pharaoh’s daughter, and he became her son. She named him Moses, “Because,” she said, “I drew him out of the water.”

iv. God’s Servant a Sinner Shown Grace – Exodus 2:11–12 (ESV) — 11 One day, when Moses had grown up, he went out to his people and looked on their burdens, and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his people. 12 He looked this way and that, and seeing no one, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.
“The Bible clearly teaches that the greatest deliverer of God’s people in the Old Testament was a murderer.” – *The Message of the Old Testament, Location 1644*

v. **God Hears His People – Exodus 2:23–25 (ESV)** — 23 During those many days the king of Egypt died, and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God. 24 And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. 25 God saw the people of Israel—and God knew.

b. Application
   i. Man might knowingly or unknowingly attempt to thwart God’s plan, but will always fail.
   ii. God’s grace and mercy is displayed in the fact that he redeems sinners and uses them for His purposes.
   iii. God loves His children and hears the cries of His children.

II. **God Makes His Name Known & Saves His People (3-14)**

a. Key Verses
   i. The Hardness of Pharaoh’s Heart
      1. **Exodus 4:21 (ESV)** — 21 And the Lord said to Moses, “When you go back to Egypt, see that you do before Pharaoh all the miracles that I have put in your power. But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go. (7:3, 9:12, 10:1, 10:20, 11:10, 14:4)
      2. **Exodus 7:13 (ESV)** — 13 Still Pharaoh’s heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the Lord had said. (7:22, 8:15, 8: 19, 8:32, 9:34)

**Was God unfair in the way he treated Pharaoh?**

“Exodus challenges the common notion that God treats all people in the same way, or that God is a committed egalitarian. No, that is not the story in Exodus. God is certainly fair; he is the standard of justice. But God does mysteriously and graciously choose to extend mercy to some. And no one can require mercy from him. It is his mercy. From a foundation of utter fairness, God chooses to extend mercy.” – *The Message of the Old Testament, Location 1728*

“That Pharaoh did harden his own heart the Scriptures expressly affirm, but they also declare that THE LORD hardened his heart too, and clearly this is not one and the same thing, or the two different ‘expressions’
would not have been employed. Our duty is to believe both statements, but to attempt to show the philosophy of their reconciliation is probably, as another has said, “to attempt to fathom infinity”. — *Gleanings in Exodus*, Pg. 55

Note that the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart was not what made him a sinner. While Pharaoh’s hardening of his heart was a sin, he was already a sinner and had shown his willingness to mistreat the Israelites long before the hardening of his heart to the miracles of God.

“[God hardening Pharaoh’s heart] indicates the extreme difficulty of Moses’ task and makes readers wonder if Pharaoh has any real chance to do the right thing. It must be remembered, however, that Pharaoh has long had the chance to cease oppressing, enslaving, and killing the Israelites.” — *Old Testament Theology*, Pg. 95

Reminder: God is the Avenger – Deuteronomy 32:35 (ESV) — 35 Vengeance is mine, and recompense, for the time when their foot shall slip; for the day of their calamity is at hand, and their doom comes swiftly.‘

ii. The Lack of Faith Among God’s People
   1. Exodus 5:20–21 (ESV) — 20 They met Moses and Aaron, who were waiting for them, as they came out from Pharaoh; 21 and they said to them, “The Lord look on you and judge, because you have made us stink in the sight of Pharaoh and his servants, and have put a sword in their hand to kill us.”

   2. Exodus 14:11 (ESV) — 11 They said to Moses, “Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us in bringing us out of Egypt?

iii. Display of God’s Power & Faithfulness
   1. Exodus 3:7–8 (ESV) — 7 Then the Lord said, “I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, 8 and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.
2. **God Reveals His Name – Exodus 3:14 (ESV) — 14** God said to Moses, “I am who I am.” And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel, ‘I am has sent me to you.’”

“In both Hebrew and Greek, the text envisages a Deity whose nature is not dependent upon other than self-yet who graciously engages with, and indeed commits to, Moses and Israel.” – *Theological Interpretation of the Old Testament, Location 463*

3. **Exodus 6:6 (ESV) — 6** Say therefore to the people of Israel, ‘I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment.

“Redemption as a release from slavery or from a position of misfortune now becomes one of the most significant themes in the Bible...The exodus is the end of captivity, but it is only the beginning of freedom. God has yet much work to show his people what it means to live freely as his people.” – *According to Plan, Pg. 137*

4. **Exodus 7:5 (ESV) — 5** The Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring out the people of Israel from among them.

“Why does not Yahweh, through Moses, simply sweep away the opposition? This is explicitly addressed in 9:14-16, in terms of the plagues serving to enhance recognition of Yahweh.” – *Theological Interpretation of the Old Testament, Location 469*

5. **Ten Plagues** – Water into Blood (7:14-25), Frogs (8:1-15), Gnats (8:16-19), Flies (8:20-32), Dead Livestock (9:1-7), Boils (9:8-12), Hail (9:13-35), Locusts (10:1-20), Darkness (10:21-29), Death of Firstborn (12:29-32) – All of these are a display of God’s power over every bit of creation.

“We may not be able to relate each plague to a polemic against a particular god or gods, but this approach seems to be on the right track. This especially makes sense because in Egypt Pharaoh *himself* is regarded as divine: his is supposed to be the son of the sun god, re. As a god, Pharaoh is responsible for maintaining...order in the cosmos or creation. ‘Rather, it is Yahweh and his agents Moses and Aaron,
who overcome the cosmic struggle, demonstrating who really controls the forces of nature.” – The Drama of Scripture, Pg. 63

6. Exodus 12:40 (ESV) — 40 The time that the people of Israel lived in Egypt was 430 years.

7. Exodus 14:30 (ESV) — 30 Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore.

b. Application
   i. Remember that God’s plan is multi-generational both in the large scale and even in the fulfillment of specific promises.

   Genesis 15:13–16 (ESV) — 13 Then the Lord said to Abram, “Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. 14 But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. 15 As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. 16 And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.”

   ii. Find ways to remember God’s faithfulness so that we do not grumble and lack faith like the Israelites.

   Exodus 12:14 (ESV) — 14 “This day shall be for you a memorial day, and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord; throughout your generations, as a statute forever, you shall keep it as a feast.

III. God Perfect Provision for His People (15-18)
   a. Key Verses
      i. Song of Moses & The People – Exodus 15:11 (ESV) — 11 “Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?

      ii. Daily Bread – Exodus 16:4–5 (ESV) — 4 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Behold, I am about to rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a day’s portion every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in my law or not. 5 On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather daily.”
iii. Water – Exodus 17:6 (ESV) — 6 Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink.” And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel.

iv. Defeating of Enemies – Exodus 17:14–16 (ESV) — 14 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Write this as a memorial in a book and recite it in the ears of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven.” 15 And Moses built an altar and called the name of it, The Lord Is My Banner, 16 saying, “A hand upon the throne of the Lord! The Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.”

v. His Provision Among Constant Grumbling

1. Exodus 16:2–3 (ESV) — 2 And the whole congregation of the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness, 3 and the people of Israel said to them, “Would that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the meat pots and ate bread to the full, for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.”

2. Exodus 17:2 (ESV) — 2 Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, “Give us water to drink.” And Moses said to them, “Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the Lord?”

“The hardships of the wilderness lead Israel to complain and to remember Egypt selectively (16:1-3). Yahweh’s response is not only to provide for them, but explicitly to test their obedience (16:4-5). After Israel is reprimanded for complaining (16:6-12), God’s provision is given (16:13-14), and initiates a didactic sequence.” – Theological Interpretation of the Old Testament, Location 488

b. Application

i. The same God that provided for the Israelites provides for His children today.

Matthew 6:31–33 (ESV) — 31 Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ 32 For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

ii. Keep a check on your grumbling and testing the Lord
Philippians 2:14–16 (ESV) — 14 Do all things without grumbling or disputing, 15 that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, 16 holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.

Seeking Christ in the Old Testament:  Moses serves as a type of Christ by giving us a picture of a deliverer of God’s people from darkness. The rescue of the Israelites from the Egyptians is a picture of our salvation where we are rescued from slavery to sin to become a Kingdom of Priests and slaves to God.

Works Cited


