

# EXODUS

## Message:

*Exodus describes two primary events: God’s powerful rescue of His people Israel from a life of slavery in Egypt (chaps. 1–18), and His gracious binding of Himself to them through a covenant relationship (chaps. 19–40).*



## Title:

The English title *Exodus* is a transliteration of the Greek word *Exodus*, the name assigned to the book in the Greek Septuagint (LXX) translation. The word “Exodus” means “exit, departure, or way out.” Exodus serves as an appropriate title to the book since it serves to describe the central historical event in Israelite history<sup>1</sup> (apart from God’s call and covenant with Abraham of course [Gen. 12 and 15])—their salvation from slavery in Egypt.

## Author:

According to Jewish and Christian tradition, *Moses wrote the Book of Exodus*. Mosaic authorship is verified by the book’s own internal testimony (15:1; 17:14; 24:4; 34:27, 28), as well as by statements in other portions of the Pentateuch (Deut. 31:9, 24). Joshua 8:31 refers to the command of Exodus 20:25 as having been “written in the Book of the Law of Moses.” Mosaic authorship is further supported in other Old Testament books such as 1 Kings 2:3; 2 Kings 14:6; Ezra 6:18; Nehemiah 8:1; 13:1; Daniel 9:1-13; and Malachi 4:4. The New Testament also claims Mosaic authorship for various passages in Exodus (e.g., Mark 7:10; 12:26; Luke 2:22-23). *In fact, Christ and several apostles quote from Exodus some twenty-five times.*

## Date of Writing:

*Time span covered.* The book covers a time span of approximately eighty-five years, from just prior to the birth of Moses in 1526 B.C. to the completion and dedication of the tabernacle at Sinai in 1445 B.C. Assuming one accepts the earlier date of 1446 B.C. for the Exodus, the compilation and writing of Exodus can be dated to some time shortly after this. Merrill may be correct in his assumption that Moses composed Exodus after the forty years of wilderness wandering, and just prior to his death—while Israel was encamped in the high desert plains of Moab, just east of Jericho directly across the Jordan River (cf. Deut. 1:1 and 31:9).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Eugene H. Merrill, suggest that “The exodus is the most significant historical and theological event of the Old Testament . . .” (*Kingdom of Priests*, 57).

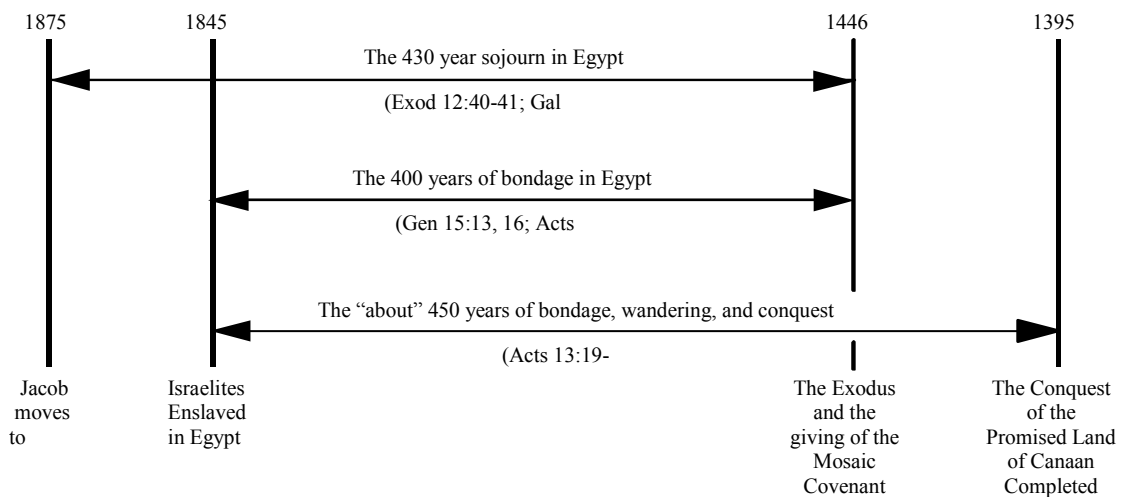
<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

## Historical Context:

*The historical setting of Exodus.* The historical setting of the Book of Exodus centers in the land of Egypt, from which the exodus of the Hebrews took place, and the Sinai Peninsula through which the Hebrews journeyed on their way to Mount Sinai where they remained for their first year (1446-1445 B.C.).

*The historical period covered by the Book of Exodus* covers roughly 430 years of history, from the arrival of Jacob and his family in Egypt (1876 B.C.) to the erection of the tabernacle in the wilderness of Sinai in 1445 B.C. The Israelites lived in Egypt 430 years (Exod. 12:40-41). Genesis 15:13 has the round number 400 years as the time of Israel's oppression in Egypt. The text of Exodus 12:40-41 is very clear that Israel was in Egypt 430 years "to the very day" (v. 41). This probably refers to the time between when Jacob entered Egypt with his family (1876 B.C.) to the day of the Exodus (1446 B.C.). Galatians 3:17 also refers to 430 years. However this figure is apparently the time from God's last reconfirmation of the Abrahamic covenant to Jacob at Beersheba (1875 B.C.; Gen 46:2-4) to the giving of the Mosaic Law at Sinai in 1446 B.C. (Exod. 19). Genesis 15:13, 16 and Acts 7:6 give the time of the Israelites' enslavement in Egypt as 400 years (1846-1446 B.C.). The "about 450 years" spoken of in Acts 13:19 includes the 400 year sojourn in Egypt, the 40 years of wilderness wanderings, and the seven year conquest of the land (1875-1395 B.C.).<sup>3</sup> The following chart presents the dates considered in association with the above references.

### Chronology of Israel Sojourn In Egypt



## Historical Problems:

<sup>3</sup>Harold W. Hoehner, "The Duration of the Egyptian Bondage," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 126:504 (October-December 1969):306-16, presents three other ways to reconcile these references. Also see Leon J. Wood, *A Survey of Israel's History*, rev ed. (1986), 19-25, 65-72.

*Determining the **Date of the Exodus**.* The date of the Exodus has been disputed by scholars for centuries. Virtually all liberal scholars and even a few conservatives hold to what has generally been termed a “late date” (1290 B.C.) for the Exodus between 1290-1225 B.C., during the reign of the famous Egyptian Pharaoh, Rameses II (ca. 1304-1237). The vast majority of conservative scholars prefer a much earlier date very close to **1446 B.C., during the reign of Amenhotep II** (ca. 1436-1410 B.C.). The earlier date of 1446 B.C. is preferable for several reasons: 1) According to 1 Kings 6:1 the time between the Exodus and the beginning of Solomon’s temple construction (declared to have commenced in the fourth year of his reign) was 480 years. Since the fourth year of Solomon’s reign was 967 B.C., the Exodus occurred in 1446 B.C.; 2) In Jephthah’s day (dated around 1105 B.C.) Israel is said to have been in the land for 300 years (Jud. 11:26). This would place Israel’s entrance in the land during the Conquest of Joshua, around 1406 B.C. (1446 B.C. for the Exodus plus 40 years in the wilderness); 3) Archeological evidence from Egypt during this time period corresponds with the biblical account (e.g. though Thutmose IV succeeded his father, Amenhotep II, Thutmose was not the eldest son); 4) Events in Canaan about 1400 B.C. correspond to those of the Conquest (e.g. archeological evidence suggests that Jericho, Ai, and Hazor were destroyed at this time).

It should be noted that the Bible does not name the pharaoh of the exodus. Extant Egyptian records do not mention Joseph, Moses, or the exodus. Archaeological data can be variously interpreted. *The key issue is how the biblical text is interpreted and applied.*

*Determining the **Route of the Exodus**:* There are two basic views concerning the route that the children of Israel took as they fled out of Egypt. **First**, is the “northern view” which says that the Exodus took place at a lagoon bordering the Mediterranean Sea. **Second**, is the “southern view,” which holds that the Exodus took place south of Succoth near Lake Balah or Lake Timsah.

Even though a definitive conclusion is not possible because of the uncertainty of many of the locations in the biblical text, the southern view matches what is known more than the northern view.<sup>4</sup> The evidence gleaned from the internal textual clues derived from Exodus 13:17-22; 14:1-2 and Numbers 33:1-49 supports the southern view for several reasons. **First**, the Lord did not lead Israel by the way of the land of the Philistines, by the Way of the Sea, the most direct route along the Mediterranean coast to Palestine (**13:17**). **Second**, the Lord led the people instead by the way of the wilderness to the Red Sea (**13:18**).<sup>5</sup> **Third**, the Lord led Israel from Rameses to Succoth (Exod. 12:37; Num. 33:5). **Fourth**, Israel set out from Succoth and camped in Etham on the edge of the wilderness (13:20). **Fifth**, Israel turned back and camped before Pihahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, in front of Baal-zephon opposite it by the sea (14:2). **Sixth**, Israel went by the Way of the Wilderness (Exod. 13:18) after crossing the Sea of Reeds and entered the Wilderness of Shur (Exod. 15:22; Num. 33:8) in the Northwest Sinai Peninsula.

### **Theological Context:**

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<sup>4</sup>Also see Hill and Walton, *A Survey of the OT*, 108-10; John D. Hannah, “Exodus,” in *BKC*, 107.

<sup>5</sup>“More literally this refers to the Sea of (papyrus) Reeds (*yam sup*) describing the area between the Gulf of Suez and the Mediterranean Sea where there are many marshy lagoons and lakes” (ibid.)

Exodus contains a number of theologically significant incidents or features. It will provide an account of how the elect Hebrew people (Gen. 12:1-3; 15:13-21; 18:18; 22:18; 26:3-4) are formed into an elect nation.

The story of the first half of Exodus, in broad summary, is **Rescue**. The story of the second half of the book, in broad summary, is **Relationship**. Both sections, *Rescue* and *Relationship*, are bound and held together by the Revelation and Presence of Almighty God, the One from whom both Rescue and Relationship derive.

Exodus provides a bridge connecting the promises contained in the Abrahamic Covenant (of *land*, *seed*, and *blessing*) and fulfillment in a people constituted as the theocratic community through whom God's redemptive purposes would be achieved.<sup>6</sup> The people of Israel were called to become "a holy nation" (Exod. 19:6) so that they could be an avenue of blessing to all of the Gentile nations of the earth (Gen. 12:3; cf. "a light for the Gentiles" Isa. 42:6).

## **Outline:**

### **I. The Rescue/Redemption of Israel from Egypt 1:1–18:27**

- A. The Oppression of Israel in Egypt 1:1-22
- B. The Preparation of Moses: Israel's Deliverer 2:1–4:31
  - 1. Moses' first forty years in Egypt 2:1-15
  - 2. Moses' second forty years in Midian 2:16-25
  - 3. Moses' return to Egypt 3:1–4:31
- C. The Confrontations of Moses and Aaron with Pharaoh in Egypt 5:1–12:36
  - 1. Moses and Aaron's first encounter with Pharaoh 5:1-23
  - 2. Moses and Aaron's reassurance by God 6:1–7:13
  - 3. Moses and Aaron's second encounter with Pharaoh 7:8-13
  - 4. Moses releases God's judgments on Egypt: the Ten Plagues 7:14–12:36

- 1) The first plague: *the Nile turned to blood* 7:14-25
- 2) The second plague: *frogs* 7:26–8:15
- 3) The third plague: *gnats* 8:16-19
- 4) The fourth plague: *swarms of insects* 8:20-32
- 5) The fifth plague: *disease (death) on the livestock* 9:1-7
- 6) The sixth plague: *boils* 9:8-12
- 7) The seventh plague: *hail* 9:13-35
- 8) The eighth plague: *locust* 10:1-20
- 9) The ninth plague: *darkness* 10:21-29
- 10) The tenth plague: *death of every first-born of Egypt* 11:1–12:36
  - a) The Passover announced 11:1-10
  - b) The Passover instituted 12:1-28

D. The Redemption (*Exodus*) of Israel from Egypt to Mount Sinai 12:37–18:27

1. Israel’s journey from Succoth to the Red Sea 12:37–14:2
2. Israel’s miraculous passage through the Red (Reed) Sea 14:3-31
3. Israel’s (*first Psalm*) song of deliverance: “Song of the Sea” 15:1-21
4. Israel’s journey from the Red Sea to Mount Sinai 15:22–18:27
  - (1) Events in the Wilderness of Shur 15:22-27
  - (2) Quail and Manna in Wilderness of Sin chap. 16

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<sup>6</sup>The Book of Exodus reveals that the only “way out” of bondage to servitude (sin), suffering, and death is through personal faith in and application of the shed blood of the “Passover Lamb” which teaches that

(3) Lack of water at Rephidim 17:1-7

(4) Hostility and defeat of the Amalekites 17:8-16

## **II. The Revelation of God to Israel at Mount Sinai 19:1–40:38**

### **A. The Institution of the Mosaic Covenant 19:1–24:18**

1. The covenant proposed and accepted 19:1-25
  
2. The Ten Commandments 20:1-26
  - 1.
  - 2.
  - 3.
  - 4.
  - 5.
  - 6.
  - 7.
  - 8.
  - 9.
  - 10.
3. The response of the Israelites 20:18-21
  
4. The ordinances of the Book of the Covenant 21:1–23:33

5. The ratification of the Mosaic Covenant 24:1-18
  - a. The public assent of the people 24:1-11
  - b. The private acceptance by God 24:12-18
  
- B. The Institution of the Tabernacle: God's Dwelling Place Among His People 25:1–31:18
  
  
- C. The Breaking and Renewing of the Covenant 32:1–34:35
  1. The breaking of the covenant 32:1-35
  
  
  2. The renewal of the covenant 33:1–34:35
  
  
- D. The Construction and Dedication of the Tabernacle and Cult Objects 35:1–40:38
  1. The tabernacle assembled 35:1–39:43
  
  
  2. The tabernacle accepted 39:32–40:33