

A Bit About Exodus

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[Most of this comes from two sources: [Prepare the Way of the Lord: An Introduction to the Old Testament](#) by Lessing and Steinmann and [Commentary on the Old Testament](#) by Keil and Delitsch.]

1. The Hebrew name for the book comes from its first two words, “and these are the names,” *ve’ela hashmot*. When The Septuagint, a Greek rendering of the Old Testament created by diaspora Jews in Alexandria, was produced, the Greek name ἐξοδος (exodus), meaning *departure* was given to it.

2. Keil and Delistch write of Exodus:

“It gives an account of the first stage in the fulfilment of the promises given to the patriarchs, with reference to the growth of the children of Israel into a numerous people, their deliverance from Egypt, and their adoption at Sinai as the people of God. It embraces a period of 360 years, extending from the death of Joseph, with which the book of Genesis closes, to the building of the tabernacle, at the commencement of the second year after the departure from Egypt.”

3. Exodus picks up where Genesis left off. At the end of Genesis, at the invitation of Egypt’s Pharaoh, because of the work of Joseph, the father of Joseph, Jacob, Joseph’s brothers, and their families were invited to live as honored residents of Egypt, specifically in the rich farm- and pasture-lands of Lower Egypt, on Egypt’s northern edge, in the Nile River Delta. This was in during the Twelfth Dynasty.

4. A number of succeeding ruling dynasties either exerted or sought to exert governing authority over Egypt in succeeding centuries. The Seventeenth Dynasty, composed of rulers from the East known as the Hykos, were eventually violently removed from power. The Eighteenth Dynasty was initiated under the Pharaoh Ahmose I, who reigned 1539-1515 BC. Ahmose was likely the Pharaoh “who did not know Joseph,” that is, he didn’t remember the role that Joseph had played in saving Egypt from famine or in enriching the country, and so, felt no sense of gratitude

for Jacob's descendants. It was with the Eighteen Dynasty that four centuries of enslavement and harsh treatment of God's people, the descendants of Jacob, the Hebrews, Israel, began.

5. Moses was likely born in 1526 BC. The exodus, the departure from Egypt by the Hebrews, likely happened in 1446 BC. There is good evidence for this from both biblical and extra-biblical sources, despite significant scholarly rejection since the 19th.-century (AD). Some have suggested later dates for Moses and the Exodus, placing them in the 13th.-century BC. However, archeological and literary evidence (biblical and extra-biblical) isn't stronger the traditional dating, which corresponds with what we're told in other places in the Old Testament.

6. Similarly, some Old Testament scholars have, since the 19th.-century, rejected the traditional acceptance of Moses as the (prime, almost exclusive) author of the first five books of the Hebrew canon, our Old Testament, the Pentateuch, consisting of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. These scholars, in what I would call speculation rather than scholarship, have posited that Exodus and the rest of the Pentateuch evolved over centuries, and that what we have came from four different streams of Hebrew belief. The JEDP theories (for Yahwist, Elohist, Deuteronomist, and Priestly) claim to detect seams and strands in the first five books of the Old Testament that were later melded by an editor or editors into the books in their present form. This is what I was taught in seminary, but I find no compelling reason, and never have, than to suppose that the Pentateuch's primary author was Moses.

7. Lessing and Steinmann identify the following major themes in Exodus:

- A. Knowing Yahweh
- B. Pharaoh's Hard Heart
- C. The Plagues
- D. God's Mission in the World
- E. Israel's Laws (given at Mount Sinai)
- F. The Tabernacle (where God dwells with His people)
- G. CHRIST IN THE TABERNACLE (this latter theme will be surfaced as we go along)

8. From Keil and Delitsch:

"the entire book from Exo 3 to Exo 40 is occupied with an elaborate

account of the events of two years, viz., the last year before the departure of the Israelites from Egypt, and the first year of their journey.”

9. In the book, Keil and Delitsch say:

“...Israel was liberated from the power of Egypt, and, as a nation rescued from human bondage, was adopted by God, the Lord of the whole earth, as the people of His possession.”

All of this was in service to God’s plans for the entire human race, about which the Risen Jesus spoke to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus: “And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.” (Luke 24:27) Exodus is ultimately about Jesus, born 1500 years after the events it recounts. We’ll talk about that throughout this study.