

Exodus Introductory Notes

From *Genesis and Exodus – A New English Rendition with Commentary and Notes*, by Everett Fox

“A number of biblical ideas receive their fullest early treatment in this book: God’s acting directly in history; making himself ‘known’ to both Israelites and foreigners; covenant as a reciprocal agreement between God and humans; law as an expression of total world view; and the use of sacred structure (Tabernacle or ‘Dwelling’) as a vehicle for and expression of perceived truths about the world.”

“Several biblical institutions make their first appearance in Exodus: Passover, Sabbath, rudimentary leadership/government, and cult/priesthood.”

“Is Exodus a fanciful reconstruction of what happened to Moshe (Moses) and his generation...or is it a faithful and reliable handing-down of eyewitness data...?”

“We possess virtually no extrabiblical references to the events recorded in our book...there seem to be inconsistencies of time...and Exodus is lacking in the citation of personal and geographical names...”

But, if Exodus is a complete work of pious fiction, why does “the rest of the Hebrew Bible abound in references to the experience of the exodus?”

“Exodus conveys far more than information about events. It is, rather, the narration of a world view, a laying out of different types of texts bearing the *meaning* of Israel’s historical experience.”

“Human memory is always selective. We remember what we wish to remember, giving weight to particular emotions, sometimes over and above the facts.”

“The book [of Exodus] is a mix of historical recollection, mythical processing, and didactic [designed to teach] retelling.”

The Hebrew word *Torah* (the name given to the first 5 books of the Hebrew Bible) means “Teaching”.

What has survived of ancient Israel is its approach to history and to life, and its literature. In that sense, the book of Exodus is an attempt to distill history and to learn from it...”

Organization of Exodus

1. Prologue in Egypt (chapter 1)
2. Moses’ Early Life and Call (chapters 2-4)
3. Moses’ Mission in Egypt (5:1 – 7:13)
4. The First Nine Plagues (7:14 – 10:29)
5. The Tenth Plague and the Exodus (chapters 11-13)
6. In the Wilderness Part 1: The Deliverance at the Sea (14:1 – 15:21)
7. In the Wilderness Part 2: Early Experiences (15:22 – 18:27)
8. Covenant at Sinai (chapters 19-20)
9. The Terms (Laws) and Conclusion of the Covenant (chapters 21-24)
10. Details of the Tabernacle (chapters 25-27)
11. Details of the Cult (chapters 28-31)
12. Rebellion and Reconciliation (chapters 32-34)
13. The Building of the Tabernacle, Priestly Vestments (chapters 35-39)
14. Conclusion (chapter 40)

Broader Organization of Exodus

- I. The Deliverance Narrative (1:1 – 15:21)
- II. In the Wilderness (15:22 – 18:27)
- III. Covenant and Law (chapters 19-24)
- IV. The Blueprints for the Tabernacle and Its Service (chapters 25-31)
- V. Infidelity and Reconciliation (chapters 32-34)
- VI. The Building of the Tabernacle (chapters 35-40)

“Change does not occur quickly, and the true molding of a people, like that of an individual, requires formative experiences over time. In Exodus, then, the People of Israel begins in adolescence, as it were. It has survived infancy in Genesis, a period marked by constant threats of physical extinction, and must now begin the tortuous process of learning to cope with adulthood – that is to say, peoplehood – in a hostile world.”