

OUR STORY: THE EXODUS

Water from Rock, May 16, 2017, Tim Smith

THE EXODUS AS THE PATTERN FOR OUR SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

1. “This is our paradigmatic Old Testament story of salvation...In reading Exodus we get a detailed sense of the way spiritual formation works in history at large but also in our history. It is ‘... the basic revelation of the pattern of divine salvific activity in all ages’ [quoting George A. F. Knight, *Theology as Narration*] (Eugene Peterson, “The Exodus Propaedeutic for Spiritual Formation,” *Reformed Review*, Sept. 1, 2003)
2. “Once heard, the story is never forgotten. For the Jews it is the story that defines their very existence, the rescue that made them God’s people. For Christians it is the Gospel of the Old Testament, God’s first great act of redemption. We return to the exodus again and again, sensing somehow that it holds significance for the entire human race. It is the story that gives every captive the hope of freedom...The exodus shows that there is a God who saves, who delivers his people from bondage...The exodus then, is a story of departure, an epic journey from slavery to salvation. As we study this book, the journey out of Egypt becomes part of our own spiritual pilgrimage.” Philip Ryken, *Exodus: Saved for God’s Glory*)
3. The Exodus is more than a past historical event. Thinking Biblically means that the Exodus is the paradigm, the model for how God always acts.

EXISTENCE IN EGPT

“Egypt” -- Mitzraim “double straits”

- Throughout the Bible, Egypt fulfills a dual role both as a place of refuge and a place of oppression, a place to "come up out of" and a place to flee to... The equation of Egypt with oppression becomes foundational to the people of Israel, providing the setting for the fundamental religious ritual of Passover.” (*Easton’s Bible Dictionary*)

Exodus 1:8-15

⁸ Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. ⁹ He said to his people, 'Look, the Israelite people are more numerous and more powerful than we. ¹⁰ Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, or they will increase and, in the event of war, join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land.' ¹¹ Therefore they set taskmasters over them to oppress them with forced labour. They built supply cities, Pithom and Rameses, for Pharaoh. ¹² But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread, so that the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites. ¹³ The Egyptians became ruthless in imposing tasks on the Israelites, ¹⁴ and made their lives bitter with hard service in mortar and brick and in every kind of field labour. They were ruthless in all the tasks that they imposed on them.

¹⁵ The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah, ¹⁶ 'When you act as midwives to the Hebrew women, and seethem on the birthstool, if it is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, she shall live.'

1. What makes the situation in Egypt especially unbearable is not only the slavery but its extreme harshness. The Egyptian slave masters are "ruthless" making the Israelites lives "bitter", with "hard service". As a result the Israelites suffer in "misery" (Exodus 3:7).
2. Egypt is a "house of slavery" (Exodus 13:3, 14; 20:2), representing
 - Oppression
 - Bitterness
 - No future
3. Egypt is in later Scripture a symbol of spiritual bondage and sin (Revelation 11:8; Hebrews 3:16; 11:27-27) and life before we come to Christ (1 Corinthians 10:1-13)

FIRST STEP IN THE EXODUS: THE ISRAELITES ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR SUFFERING

Exodus 2:23-25

²³ After a long time the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned under their slavery, and cried out. Out of the slavery their cry for help rose up to God. ²⁴ God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. ²⁵ God looked upon the Israelites, and God took notice of them.

1. “The context of suffering and oppression is also emphasized by the Hebrew’s own outcry which mobilizes the liberating activity of God. It is important to note that the outcry is not directed to God; it is not public prayer. It is a human cry of pain, yet God hears. God’s direct action enters the story in response to Israel’s cry of pain.” (Walter Brueggemann, et al. *A Theological Introduction to the Old Testament*)
2. The Israelites had been in Egypt for 430 years (Exodus 12:40-41) before they cried out thus beginning the Exodus. While in Egypt, the Israelites worshipped the gods of the Egyptians (Joshua 24:14-15; Ezekiel 23:19-20).
3. Compare the Israelites brokenness with the first step of AA: “We admitted we were powerless over alcohol – that our lives had become unmanageable.”

THE PURPOSE OF THE EXODUS: TO WORSHIP AND KNOW THE LORD

1. To worship the LORD

Exodus 8:1

Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Go to Pharaoh and say to him, ‘Thus says the LORD: Let my people go, so that they may worship me.

- The liberation of the Exodus is that the Hebrews can worship the LORD rather than serve Pharaoh.
 - Note: the Hebrew word for “worship” is the same word used in to “serve” Pharaoh.
 - The Exodus is a move from servitude to Pharaoh and the false gods of Egypt to service to the Lord. (Compare the Book of Common Prayer’s phrase, “...Whose service is perfect freedom).
 - God is a liberator at work to free us to be what He created us to be.
2. To Know” the LORD

“The Exodus story is a story through which the character of God is revealed. It is Pharaoh who poses the dramatic question at the heart of

this story, 'Who is Yahweh?' (Exodus 5:2) Repeatedly, the narrative states a primary motivation for God's self-disclosure and action in the Exodus events is to make Yahweh known to Israel (Exodus 6:3, 7; 10:2) to Pharaoh/Egypt (7:17; 8:10, 22; 9:14, 29; 11:7; 14:4, 18), and eventually to all the peoples of the earth (cf. 15:14-15; 18:8-12). (Walter Brueggemann, et al. *A Theological Introduction to the Old Testament*)

7:17 *"By this you shall know that I am the LORD*

8:10 *"...that you may know that there is no one like the LORD our God"*

8:22 *"...that they may know that I am the LORD in the midst of the earth."*

9:14 *"...that you may know that there is none like me in all the earth."*

9:29 *"..that you may know that the earth is the LORD'S"*

BROKENNESS

Exodus 6:6-9

⁶Say therefore to the Israelites, "I am the LORD, and I will free you from the burdens of the Egyptians and deliver you from slavery to them. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgement. ⁷I will take you as my people, and I will be your God. You shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has freed you from the burdens of the Egyptians. ⁸I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; I will give it to you for a possession. I am the LORD." ⁹Moses told this to the Israelites; but they would not listen to Moses, because of their broken spirit and their cruel slavery.

"Brokenness and wounding do not occur in order to break human dignity but to open the heart so God can act." (Martin Marty, quoted by Sue Monk Kidd, *When the Heart Waits*)

*"Let the redeemed of the LORD tell their story ---
those he redeemed from the hand of the foe."*

(Psalm 107:2 NIV)