



THE BOOK OF EXODUS: A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

READING GUIDE, QUESTIONS AND FURTHER READINGS

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40. Instructions for setting up and consecrating the Tabernacle and the priests, the divine Presence enters the Tabernacle

Questions for Reflection and Conversation

- What is the situation of the Israelites in Egypt at the beginning of the Book of Exodus? What has changed over the generations since the time of Joseph? (For this and more, consider Stephen's speech to the council in Acts 7:1-53.)
- Moses is immediately introduced as "beautiful" (2:2)—what is the significance of this? Think, perhaps, about what Moses's first actions in the Book of Exodus are (2:11f.) and what God does throughout the Book of Exodus (see, for example, 2:23-25).
- The name that the Lord reveals to Moses in 3:14 is "Ehyeh-Asher-Ehyeh", which may be translated as "I Am Who Am" or, alternatively, "I Will Be What I Will Be". How do these two translations—separately and together—invite you to ponder the mystery of the Lord's name?
- At the end of chapter 3, the Lord promises that the Israelites will not go away from Egypt empty-handed (compare to 12:35-36). By the end of the Book of Exodus, consider the importance of this point.
- How is the relationship of Aaron to Moses similar to the relationship of Moses to God? (see 4:14-17; 7:1).
- What exactly is the initial request of Moses and Aaron to the Pharaoh (see 5:1; compare to 4:22-23 and 7:16)? What does this tell you about the depth of meaning of Israel's liberation from Egypt?
- Practically speaking, what does Pharaoh fear? Why won't he let the Israelites go out into the wilderness? See, for example, 8:21-24 and 10:7-11 and 10:24-26.
- Consider the tenth and final plague (11:1-9; 12:29-36) in relation to what the Lord says to Moses in 4:22-23.
- The blood of the Passover lamb on the doorposts keeps the Israelite firstborn from death (12:7-13) and the unleavened bread is prepared to sustain them for their journey into the wilderness. How, for Christians, are these symbols fulfilled in Jesus Christ?
- The night of vigil after 430 years of life in Egypt is the departure of the entire people of Israel from the land of their captivity. This very night is recalled and made present in the Easter Vigil for Christians. What is the significance of "all the hosts of the Lord [going] out from the land of Egypt", together as one people?
- When Pharaoh increases the hardships of the Israelites, how do the Israelites respond to Moses and Aaron, and how do Moses and Aaron respond to God (see 5:20-23)? Compare this to the complaints of the Israelites in 14:10-14 and 17:1-4, and ultimately in chapter 32 (especially verses 9-14).
- Why do the Egyptians pursue the Israelites? Who is responsible for their drowning in the sea? See Exodus 14.
- How does the hymn of praise the Israelites sing in Exodus 15 harken back to the revelation of the Lord's name in Exodus 3? Who has God revealed himself to be?
- How long does it take the Israelites to start pining for their days in Egypt? Now that they are on the other side of the Red Sea with the Egyptians no longer capable of pursuing them, how are they free and how are they not free? See Exodus 16.
- How are the Israelites sustained by food and drink in the desert wilderness? Why must they not gather food on the seventh day?
- In Exodus 25, Moses begins to receive the instructions for the construction of the Tabernacle. What is the Tabernacle? Where will the materials come from? Who is going to build it? Why are these instructions so excessively detailed?
- When the Israelites see Moses coming down the mountain, they construct a golden calf (Exodus 32). Where did they get the materials? What is the significance of this idol in relation to the Tabernacle that Moses was going to instruct them to build?
- When the Lord sees the golden calf, what does He say He will do to the people and what does He say He will do for Moses (see 32:7-9)? What is Moses being offered? How does Moses respond and how might this relate to what we read of Moses in 5:20-23, 14:10-14, and 17:1-4? How, again, is the relationship of Aaron to Moses like the relationship of Moses to God (see 32:19-25)?
- What is the significance of the "gate of the camp" in Exodus 32:25-35?
- What gets things moving with respect to the construction of the Tabernacle in Exodus 35. How is this different than first (non-)attempt?
- Contemplate the ending of the Book of Exodus. What was this whole journey about?

Suggestions for Further Reading

Jean Daniélou, *The Bible and the Liturgy* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009) especially the following sections:

- Chapter Five: "Types of Baptism: The Crossing of the Red Sea," 86–98.
- Chapter Nine: "The Figures of the Eucharist," 142–61.
- Chapter Ten: "The Paschal Lamb," 162–76.
- Chapter Twenty: "The Feast of Tabernacles," 333–48.

Jean Daniélou, "Book IV: Moses and the Exodus" in *From Shadows to Reality: Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers* (London, Burns and Oates, 1960).

Leonard DeLorenzo, *Work of Love: A Theological Reconstruction of the Communion of Saints* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2017) 189–202.

Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Moses*, trans. Abraham Malherbe and Everett Ferguson (New York: Paulist Press, 1978).

John Henry Newman, "Moses the Type of Christ," in *Parochial and Plain Sermons* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997), 1488–95.

Origen, "The Homilies on Exodus" in *Homilies on Genesis and Exodus*, trans. Ronald E. Heine (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2002), 227–388.

Selected Commentaries on Exodus

Robert Alter, *The Five Books of Moses: A Translation with Commentary* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008).

Brevard Childs, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974).

John Durham, *Exodus in World Bible Commentary, Volume 3* (Waco, Texas: Thomas Nelson, 1987).

Terence Fretheim, *Exodus* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox, 1991).

Gerald Janzen, *Exodus* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox, 1997).

Joseph Lienhard, "Commentary on Exodus" in *Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy: Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Old Testament, Volume III* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2001) 1–162.