



Moses · c. 1446–1406 BC · Old Testament · Law

Exodus

From slavery to freedom — the great rescue and the birth of a nation

“I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: I AM has sent me to you.”

— Exodus 3:14

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VISUAL OVERVIEW INFOGRAPHIC

Events span approximately 1446-1406 BC

EXODUS

Book 2: The Law · Written by Moses

Events span approximately 1446-1406 BC

CHAPTER STRUCTURE

1-6: Israel in Egypt —
Oppression, Moses' birth, burning bush, God's call

7-12: The Ten Plagues —
Nile to blood, darkness, Passover lamb, death of firstborn

13-20: Exodus & Sinai —
Red Sea crossing, manna, water from rock, Ten Commandments

21-31: The Law & Tabernacle —
Civil laws, worship instructions, tabernacle blueprint

KEY CHARACTERS

Moses
(staff, radiant face)

Aaron
(priestly garments)

Miriam
(tambourine)

Pharaoh
(crown, stern expression)

Jethro
(elder, desert robes)

32-40: Golden Calf & Tabernacle Built —
Rebellion, Moses intercedes, glory fills the tabernacle

SYMBOLISM

Burning Bush
God's holiness, the divine call, I AM WHO I AM

Passover Blood
Substitutionary sacrifice, foreshadows Christ

Cloud & Fire Pillar
God's presence, guidance, protection

KEY THEMES

God Sees & Acts

The Passover Lamb

The Sinai Covenant

The Tabernacle

"I AM WHO I AM." — Exodus 3:14

Visual overview of Exodus — liberation, covenant, and the Tabernacle.

CHAPTER-BY-CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Exodus is the foundational narrative of the Old Testament — the story of how God rescued a nation of slaves, revealed His name, gave His law, and came to dwell among His people. Written by Moses (c. 1446–1406 BC), it picks up where Genesis ended: the family of Jacob has grown into a nation of millions, but they are enslaved in Egypt. In forty chapters, Exodus moves from groaning to glory — from the cry of oppressed slaves to the cloud of God's presence filling the completed Tabernacle. Every major theme of the Bible — redemption, covenant, law, worship, and the presence of God — finds its defining expression here.

SECTION 1

Exodus 1–6 SLAVERY, CALLING, AND THE NAME OF GOD



1:1–2:25 Israel's explosive growth in Egypt triggers Pharaoh's fear, leading to brutal enslavement and the order to kill Hebrew infant boys. Into this darkness, Moses is born, hidden, and providentially placed in Pharaoh's own household.

3:1–4:31 At the burning bush on Mount Horeb, God reveals His name — I AM WHO I AM (YHWH) — and commissions Moses to lead the Exodus. Moses' five objections are met with five divine promises. Aaron is appointed as spokesman.

5:1–6:30 Moses' first confrontation with Pharaoh results in increased oppression. The people turn against Moses. God reaffirms His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and promises to bring Israel out with an outstretched arm.

SECTION 2

Exodus 7–12 THE TEN PLAGUES AND THE PASSOVER



7:1–10:29 Nine plagues strike Egypt in three triads — each targeting a specific Egyptian deity. The Nile turns to blood (Hapi), frogs invade (Heqet), darkness falls (Ra). Pharaoh's heart hardens after each plague, fulfilling God's declared purpose.

11:1–12:36 The tenth plague — the death of the firstborn — is announced. God institutes the Passover: an unblemished lamb is slaughtered, its blood applied to the doorposts, and the family eats in haste, dressed for departure. Death passes over every household marked by blood.

12:37–51 Israel departs Egypt — 600,000 men plus women and children — after 430 years. The Passover is established as a perpetual ordinance for all generations. The Exodus has begun.

SECTION 3

Exodus 13–20 THE RED SEA, THE WILDERNESS, AND MOUNT SINAI 

- 13:1–15:21** God leads Israel by a pillar of cloud and fire. Pharaoh pursues with his army. At the Red Sea, Moses stretches out his hand and the waters part. Israel crosses on dry ground; the Egyptian army is drowned. Miriam leads the women in song.
- 15:22–18:27** The wilderness journey begins: bitter water made sweet at Marah, manna and quail provided in the desert, water from the rock at Massah and Meribah. Jethro advises Moses on delegating leadership. Israel arrives at Mount Sinai.
- 19:1–20:21** God descends on Sinai in fire, smoke, and thunder. The people tremble at the foot of the mountain. Moses ascends to receive the Ten Commandments — the charter of the covenant community, preceded by the declaration: 'I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt.'

SECTION 4

Exodus 21–31 THE BOOK OF THE COVENANT AND THE TABERNACLE BLUEPRINT 

- 21:1–23:33** The Book of the Covenant: detailed laws governing slavery, personal injury, property, worship, and community life. These laws apply the Ten Commandments to concrete situations, revealing how a redeemed people should treat one another and the vulnerable.
- 24:1–18** The covenant is ratified: Moses reads the Book of the Covenant, the people respond 'We will do everything the Lord has said,' and Moses sprinkles blood on the altar and the people. Moses then ascends into the cloud on Sinai for forty days.
- 25:1–31:18** God gives Moses the detailed blueprint for the Tabernacle — the portable sanctuary that will be God's dwelling among His people. Every measurement and material is specified. The Ark of the Covenant, the Menorah, the Altar of Incense, and the priestly garments are all described in precise detail.

SECTION 5

Exodus 32–40 THE GOLDEN CALF, COVENANT RENEWAL, AND THE TABERNACLE BUILT 

- 32:1–33:23** While Moses is on the mountain, Israel makes a golden calf and worships it. God threatens to destroy the nation; Moses intercedes boldly, arguing from God's own promises. God relents. Moses descends, shatters the tablets, and confronts Aaron. Moses then makes the most audacious request in the book: 'Show me your glory' (33:18).
- 34:1–35** The covenant is renewed: God re-engraves the Ten Commandments and reveals His character — 'The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness' (34:6). Moses descends with a radiant face.
- 35:1–40:38** The Tabernacle is built exactly as God commanded. The craftsmen Bezalel and Oholiab lead the work. When the Tabernacle is completed and consecrated, the cloud of God's glory fills it — so thick that even Moses cannot enter. The Exodus reaches its climax: God has come to live among His people.

KEY THEMES

Exodus establishes the theological foundations on which the entire Bible is built: a God who acts in history, a people redeemed by grace, a law given as covenant charter, and a dwelling place where the holy God meets sinful humanity.

01 THE GOD WHO SEES AND ACTS



01

Exodus opens with God hearing the groaning of His people and remembering His covenant (2:24–25). The divine name **YHWH** — I AM WHO I AM — reveals a God who is not distant or passive but actively present in history. He sees the affliction of His people, comes down to deliver them, and goes before them as a pillar of cloud and fire. The Exodus is the defining demonstration in the Old Testament that God is a God who acts.

MODERN APPLICATION

When you are in a season of waiting or suffering, Exodus invites you to remember: God sees. He has not forgotten. His timing is not indifference — it is preparation. What situation in your life do you need to bring before the God who sees?

“I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering.” — Exodus 3:7

02 LIBERATION AND THE PASSOVER LAMB



02

The **Passover** is the theological heart of Exodus. An unblemished lamb is sacrificed; its **blood** is applied to the doorposts; death passes over the households marked by **blood**. This is not magic — it is **substitution**. The lamb dies so the firstborn lives. The New Testament identifies Jesus as the **Passover** Lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7; John 1:29), and the Last Supper is a **Passover** meal. Every communion service is a remembrance of the greater Exodus — **liberation** from sin and death through the **blood** of the Lamb.

MODERN APPLICATION

The Passover was not just a historical event but a meal to be repeated and remembered. How does the practice of communion (or regular reflection on Christ’s sacrifice) shape your daily sense of freedom and gratitude?

“When I see the blood, I will pass over you.” — Exodus 12:13

03 COVENANT AT SINAI



03

The Ten Commandments are not a ladder to climb to God but a **charter** for a people already redeemed. God does not say, “Obey these commands and I will rescue you.” He says, “I rescued you from Egypt — now here is how to live as My people.” The **law** is a gift to a liberated people, not a burden imposed on slaves. It defines the character of the community that bears God’s name.

MODERN APPLICATION

The order matters: redemption before law. We do not obey to earn God’s love; we obey because we have already received it. How does understanding the Ten Commandments as a response to grace (rather than a means of earning it) change how you relate to God’s commands?

“I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.” — Exodus 20:2



The second half of Exodus (chapters 25–40) is almost entirely devoted to the **Tabernacle** — its design, construction, and consecration. This is not architectural detail for its own sake. The **Tabernacle** is the answer to the deepest question of Exodus: can a holy God dwell with a sinful people? The answer is yes — through sacrifice, priesthood, and the specific structures God provides. When the cloud of **glory** fills the completed **Tabernacle**, the Exodus reaches its climax: God has come to live among His people.

MODERN APPLICATION

The Tabernacle points forward to the Incarnation (John 1:14 — “the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us”) and ultimately to the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:3 — “God’s dwelling place is now among the people”). What does it mean to you that God’s deepest desire is not just to forgive you but to dwell with you?

“Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them.” — Exodus 25:8

SYMBOLISM & IMAGERY

Exodus’ symbols are among the most powerful in all of Scripture — each one a window onto the character of God and a pointer toward the greater redemption accomplished in Christ.



THE BURNING BUSH

SYMBOL 01

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Moses encountered a bush that burned but was not consumed on **Mount Horeb**. This was the site of his divine commission. The burning bush was not a common phenomenon — its uncanny persistence is what drew Moses to look.

THEOLOGICAL MEANING

The burning bush symbolizes the presence of God — holy, consuming, yet sustaining. It also foreshadows Israel’s experience: a people in the fire of affliction who are not destroyed. In the New Testament, Stephen cites the burning bush as the moment God revealed Himself as the **God of the living**. The fire that does not consume is the fire of God’s love.



THE TEN PLAGUES

SYMBOL 02

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Each of the ten plagues targeted a specific Egyptian deity: the **Nile**, frogs, the sun. The plagues were not random disasters but a systematic dismantling of Egypt’s religious worldview, demonstrating that YHWH is supreme over every so-called god.

THEOLOGICAL MEANING

The plagues are a **cosmic trial**: YHWH vs. the gods of Egypt. The verdict is unambiguous. This pattern — God’s judgment exposing the emptiness of idols — runs throughout Scripture. Every idol eventually fails its worshippers. The plagues invite us to examine what we are trusting in besides God.



THE PASSOVER LAMB

SYMBOL 03

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Passover lamb had to be without blemish, male, one year old. Its blood was applied to the doorposts with **hyssop**. The family ate the lamb in haste, dressed for travel. This meal was to be repeated annually as a **perpetual ordinance**.

THEOLOGICAL MEANING

Paul explicitly identifies Christ as our Passover lamb: “Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed”. John the Baptist calls Jesus “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world”. The Passover is the interpretive key to the cross: **substitution**, protection through blood, and liberation from bondage.



THE PILLAR OF CLOUD AND FIRE

SYMBOL 04

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

God led Israel through the wilderness as a pillar of **cloud by day** and a pillar of fire by night. The pillar moved when Israel was to move and stopped when they were to camp.

THEOLOGICAL MEANING

The pillar is the visible manifestation of God’s presence and guidance. It anticipates the **Holy Spirit**, who guides believers into all truth. The pillar also connects to the **Shekinah glory** that fills the Tabernacle and Temple, and ultimately to the glory of God that fills the **New Jerusalem**.



THE TABERNACLE

SYMBOL 05

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Tabernacle was a portable sanctuary built according to exact divine specifications. It contained the **Ark of the Covenant** in the **Most Holy Place**, separated from the Holy Place by a thick curtain. Only the High Priest could enter the Most Holy Place, once a year on **Yom Kippur**.

THEOLOGICAL MEANING

John 1:14 says the Word “tabernacled among us”. Jesus is the true Tabernacle — God’s dwelling among humanity. When Jesus dies, the Temple curtain tears in two, opening access to God’s presence for all. The Tabernacle points to the cross, and the cross points to the **New Jerusalem**.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

These 8 questions are designed for a 60–90 minute small group session. Begin with the icebreaker, then work through observation, interpretation, and application questions. Close with the prayer prompt.

ICEBREAKER

Have you ever felt “called” to do something that felt far beyond your ability or comfort zone? What happened? How did you respond?

01

OBSERVATION

Read Exodus 3:1–14. Moses gives five objections to God’s call (3:11, 3:13, 4:1, 4:10, 4:13). How does God respond to each one? What does this pattern tell us about how God handles our doubts and fears?

Leader’s Note:

God never dismisses Moses’ fears — He addresses each one with a specific promise or provision. The pattern suggests that honest objection is not the opposite of faith; it is often the beginning of it.

02

OBSERVATION

Compare Exodus 14:10–12 (Israel’s fear at the Red Sea) with Exodus 15:1–2 (Israel’s song after crossing). What changed between these two moments? What does this rapid shift from fear to praise tell us about human nature and faith?

03

INTERPRETATION

Exodus 20:2 begins the Ten Commandments with a statement of identity and history: “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt.” Why does God introduce the commandments this way? How does this change how we understand the nature of the law?

Leader’s Note:

The commandments are not a means of earning God’s favor — they are a response to grace already given. The order of redemption before law is foundational to understanding the entire Bible’s message.

04

INTERPRETATION

In Exodus 32–33, Moses intercedes for Israel after the golden calf incident. He argues that God’s reputation is at stake: “What will the Egyptians say?” (32:12). Then he makes the most audacious request in the book: “Show me your glory” (33:18). What does Moses’ boldness in prayer reveal about his relationship with God? What does it invite us to?

Leader’s Note:

Moses’ intercession is one of the most powerful examples of prayer in Scripture. He argues with God — and God listens. This models a kind of prayer that is honest, persistent, and grounded in God’s own character and promises.

05

APPLICATION

The Israelites grumbled repeatedly in the wilderness despite witnessing extraordinary miracles. Where do you see a similar pattern in your own life — forgetting past deliverances when facing new challenges? What practices help you remember what God has done?

06

APPLICATION

Exodus 25:8 says God’s purpose in the Tabernacle is “that I may dwell among them.” The New Testament says believers are now the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19). What does it mean for your daily life that God desires to dwell with you — not just visit you?

07

PRAYER PROMPT

Close by reading Exodus 33:14 together: “My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.” Have each person share one “wilderness” they are currently walking through — a place of uncertainty, waiting, or hardship. Then pray together, asking God for the assurance of His presence in that specific place.

08

KEY CHARACTERS

Moses



A Hebrew raised in Pharaoh's palace, called by God at the burning bush to lead his people out of slavery and receive the law on Mount Sinai. His life is a portrait of reluctant obedience transformed into bold

Pharaoh



The king of Egypt whose hardened heart leads to ten devastating plagues and the destruction of his army in the Red Sea. His story is a warning about the consequences of pride and the futility of resisting the

Aaron



Moses' brother and appointed spokesman, who serves as the first High Priest of Israel. His role is both glorious and tragic: he facilitates the golden calf disaster yet is consecrated to lead Israel's worship.

Miriam



Moses' sister, a prophetess who watched over the infant Moses in the Nile and led the women of Israel in worship after the crossing of the Red Sea (Exodus 15:20–21). Her song is one of the oldest poems in the

PRACTICAL APPLICATION — LIVING IT OUT TODAY



God Sees and Hears You

"I have seen their misery and heard their crying." Whatever you're going through, you are not invisible to God. This week, bring one specific burden to God in prayer — not a polished request, but an honest cry. Trust that the God who heard Israel's groaning hears yours.



Obedience Precedes the Miracle

The priests had to step into the water before it parted. Faith acts first — certainty comes after the step. Identify one area where God is calling you to act in obedience before you can see the outcome. Take the step this week.



Intercession Changes Things

Moses' prayer after the golden calf shows that prayer is not passive — it is one of the most powerful forces in the universe. Choose one person or situation this week to intercede for persistently, grounding your prayer in God's own character and promises as Moses did.

EXODUS — My Study Notes



Liberation & Covenant

Key Verse



God's Provision



Personal Reflection



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“My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.”

— Exodus 33:14