

**Book of exodus:
message, themes,
characters, and new
testament context**



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Part 1: The Book of Exodus and its Message

In his theory of forms, the philosopher Plato proposes that the objects and situations encountered in the mundane world are often indicative of a higher and fuller reality. While Plato did not have the Old Testament in mind when he wrote “The Republic”, his concept of reality speaks to the relationship between the highlight of Jewish scripture, Ve-eleh Shemoth, better known as “Exodus”, and the events that would eventually become the focus of Christianity. In many ways, the Exodus is the thematic well from which the rest of the Bible draws. In its pages, one finds the departure of Israel from slavery in Egypt, the revelation of the Law on Mount Sinai, the journey towards Canaan, and the beginnings of Judaic religious practice. As the cornerstone of Old Testament soteriology, Yahweh’s deliverance of His people from Egypt is a pivotal event in the unfolding of God’s covenant with Israel, as well as the theological archetype in which Christianity is rooted. Furthermore, the events of the Exodus precipitate the creation of the Torah, or Teaching, and thus can be viewed as the direct antecedent of later Jewish customs. The story of the Exodus is well-known, having been the subject of numerous films and books, but its causes reach deep into the narratives of the first book of the Torah, bere-sit, or “Genesis”, as it is called in the Pentateuch. There, Yahweh blesses Abraham with the promise that Abraham’s offspring will inherit the land of Canaan, establishing a nation through which the entire Earth will be blessed. This forms the bedrock of the covenant relationship between God and Abraham’s descendents, the children of Israel. Genesis 15, however, contains a more foreboding prophecy: 13 And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not their’s, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; 14 And <https://assignbuster.com/book-of-exodus-message-themes-characters-and-new-testament-context/>

also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. Thus, it was known as early as the time of the Patriarchs that Israel would endure a period of bondage in a foreign land before the covenant came to its fruition. The groundwork for this event is laid in Genesis 45, when Joseph moves the progenitors of the twelve tribes of Israel into Egypt, where they make their home in the northern region of Goshen. Over time, this small ethnic enclave grew to become a potential threat to Egyptian sovereignty. In order to allay his fears that the Israelites would betray Egypt in the event of a war, the Pharaoh of Exodus imposed the implacable chains of slavery on Joseph's descendants, effectively preventing them from rebellion. When servitude proved ineffective, the Pharaoh added genocide to his program, ordering that all newborn Jewish males be slaughtered to prevent population growth amongst the Israelites. Placing an exact date on these events has proven futile, but most scholars believe that the Exodus took place during the first half of the 13th century, B. C. (LaSor, 59). Since the Biblical text does not explicitly mention the year in which the departure from Egypt took place, such exegesis has relied heavily on extra-biblical sources, as well as clues found in the text itself. Exodus 1: 11 informs the reader that the Israelite slaves were responsible for the construction of the cities Pithom and Raameses (or Pi-Rameses), which were built sometime after 1290 B. C (LaSor, 59). This dating is further attested to by the " Israel Stele" (see Figure 1): a limestone monument erected c. 1209 B. C. by Pharaoh Merneptah, which was unearthed in Thebes in 1896 (Wood). The stele, which boasts of the Pharaoh's military victories in Canaan, includes the phrase: " Israel is wasted, bare of seed" (Dunn). Aside from being the earliest non-Biblical reference to the name " Israel", the Stele demonstrates <https://assignbuster.com/book-of-exodus-message-themes-characters-and-new-testament-context/>

that the Israelites were established in the land of Canaan by 1209 B. C. (LaSor, 59). If this is true, then the Exodus would have taken place at least 40 years earlier, placing it in mid-1300s B. C. While this dating of the Exodus is still debated amongst scholars, it places the Exodus about two hundred years after the Hyksos period: a time when Egypt was dominated by foreign Semitic kings. The resulting xenophobia may account for the Pharaoh's suspicion of the teeming Hebrew population. In the midst of this milieu, the Bible reports, God raised up the deliverer Moses to bring the Israelites out of bondage and lead them into the land of Canaan. Central to these events are the ten ominous plagues that Moses sends upon Egypt, which increase in severity as Pharaoh's heart hardens. As William Sanford LaSor describes on pages 68 and 70 of *Old Testament Survey*, the literary form used in describing the plagues is to break them down into three groups of three. They follow this pattern: Before the first plague, Moses confronts Pharaoh by the river at dawn. Before the second plague, Moses and Aaron "come before" Pharaoh. Before the third plague, they do not appear before Pharaoh, but instead use a symbolic gesture. In Biblical numerology, the number three is associated with the Triune presence of God (Slick), so its triple presence in the plague story indicates the divine source of these calamities. Further, three times three brings up the number nine, which is paradoxically considered a number of judgment and blessing (Slick). That the plagues are ten in number indicates the completion of God's plan of deliverance (Slick). As YHWH declares in Exodus 12: 12, additional significance is added to the plagues because they are direct assaults on the nature-based deities of Egyptian religion. By attacking the elements themselves, God contrasts his power with Egyptian superstition

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(Pennington). The sacred Nile River is turned to blood in Exodus 7, for instance, and the sun revered as Aten, the supreme deity, by Egyptians (Pennington) is darkened in Exodus 10. Finally, the tenth plague – the death of Egypt's firstborn – comes against Pharaoh himself, who was held by the Egyptians to be an incarnate god (Pennington), and the tyrant's will is finally broken. This final plague precipitates the introduction of the festival of Passover in chapter 12, during which a year-old lamb is sacrificed and its blood placed upon the Israelites' doorposts. Acting as a symbol of redemption, the blood serves as a signal for God to "pass over" the house upon which it was applied, thus sparing the Israelites' firstborn from suffering the plague of death. The lamb's meat was then quickly eaten along with unleavened bread and bitter herbs, and the Israelites prepared themselves for the coming journey, as described in Exodus 12: 11. While some scholars argue that the Passover already existed as "a spring festival customary to shepherd people" (LaSor, 70), the events surrounding the tenth plague clearly elevated the importance of the paschal tradition, as is evidenced in the continued practice of the feast amongst contemporary Jews.

Furthermore, the Passover is particularly important for Christians, who recognize it as a prefiguring of the blood of Christ. Communion, which is a central ritual of the Christian church, derives both its imagery and its use of unleavened bread from the Jewish Passover. For both Jews and Christians, the symbolism of the meal is indicative of God's power to bring his people out of oppression. Exactly what route the Israelites followed after the Passover is not known, but indications of their route are related in passages such as Exodus 12: 37; 13: 17-14: 4; and Numbers 33: 5-8 (see Figure 2). In

Exodus 13: 17, the Bible states: " God led them not through the way of the <https://assignbuster.com/book-of-exodus-message-themes-characters-and-new-testament-context/>

land of the Philistines.” Historically, “ the way of the Philistines” referred to an efficient trade route that ran up the coast of Palestine, arriving at Canaan by way of the city of Gaza (LaSor, 61). Because this route was well-traveled and the site of numerous Egyptian fortresses and supply depots, it was to be avoided at all costs by the Israelite exiles (LaSor, 61). Instead, the Hebrews chose to trudge through the isolated “ Way of the Wilderness” (Ex. 13: 18), which ran through the “ Wilderness of Shur” (15: 22) in the Sinai Peninsula, eventually arriving at the fabled Mount Sinai. In most English Bibles, both Exodus 13: 18 and Numbers 33: 11 seem to suggest that a miraculous crossing of the Red Sea served as the starting point for the Israelites’ wanderings in the Sinai Desert. While the historicity of the parting of the waters is to be accepted on Faith, not all scholars agree that the traditional site of the miracle is accurate. In Hebrew, the name translated as “ Red Sea” literally reads “ Sea of Reeds”, leading some to conclude that the location of the water-crossing would have been one of the marshes near the present day Suez Canal (LaSor, 61). One can imagine that the wheels of the Egyptian chariots would have become mired in this muddy region, only to be swept away when the waters returned. Equally vague is the location of Mount Sinai, which traditional reckonings place near the southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula, where there lies a range of mountains that the Arabs call Jebel Musa, or “ Mountain of Moses”. At this nexus of Heaven and Earth, Moses received the pivotal revelation that would later become the foundation of the Torah. Inscribed on two stone tablets and placed in the Ark of the Covenant, the Ten Commandments reveal God’s expectations for how His people should relate both to Him and to each other in the period following the Exodus. They are not the conditions by which the people were saved, but a <https://assignbuster.com/book-of-exodus-message-themes-characters-and-new-testament-context/>

response to having already been saved from Egypt. In literary form, they are similar to other legal codes of the Near East, such as Hammurabi's Code from Babylon (LaSor, 73-72). Further, they mirror the style of a Near Eastern Suzerain Treaty, in that they codify the relations of a king (YHWH) and a vassal (Israel) in the form of an "I and Thou" dialogue (LaSor, 75). While commonly called "Commandments," the revelations which Moses received on Mt. Sinai would more accurately be called ten "words" or "teachings", as indicated by the Pentateuch's use of the Greek word Decalogue (from "deka", ten; and "logos", word) ("The Ten Commandments"). Illustrating this point, the first teaching is "I am Yahweh your God", which is believed to be the initial revelation of the Tetragrammaton YHWH (LaSor 67). Although English Bibles translate "Yahweh" as "Lord", it is better understood as a derivative of the Hebrew verb haya, meaning "he is". Thus, it is the third-person equivalent of the name revealed by God at the Burning Bush - "I AM". "Lord" is substituted for YHWH, because the Tetragrammaton was not verbally pronounced out of fear of violating the commandment against taking the Lord's name in vain (LaSor 67). According to the Ten Commandments, YHWH is to be the only God of Israel, and idolatry is to be condemned. Although idol-worship was common at the time of the Exodus, the Decalogue's prohibition of the practice demonstrates the unique emphasis that the Jewish worldview places on the relationship between man and God. "Graven images" are forbidden because God has already created humankind in His image in Genesis 1: 26. Thus, from a Biblical perspective, the devotion and respect which one would give to an idol should instead be turned towards one's fellow human beings, through the principals laid out in the rest of the Bible. To house the Ark of the Covenant and its sacred

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contents, the Israelites constructed a portable place of worship called a “Tabernacle”, the specifications of which are recorded in Exodus 25-40. With the introduction of the Tabernacle, the Jewish faith began its transition from the personal devotion of the Patriarchs to the formalized religion of the post-Exodus period. Perhaps this transition was spurred on by the idolatry of Exodus 32, which would have forced Moses to come to terms with the need for institutionalized religious practices. Surrounding the Tabernacle was a fence and an outer court, where burnt offerings were performed for the people. Beyond this stood the “Tent of Meeting,” the first room of which was called the “Holy Place”. Levitical Priests were permitted to enter this sanctuary, and it was here that the majority of priestly activity took place. Behind the Holy Place was a room called the “Holy of Holies”, which contained the Ark and was believed to be the literal dwelling place of God (Barrow). Only once per year, on Yom Kippur, was the High Priest permitted to enter this most sacred chamber with sacrificial blood on his hands. Aside from its role in the Day of Atonement, the Tabernacle foreshadows Christ in His role as God’s presence in the midst of humankind (Barrow). This foreshadowing is attested to in John 1: 14, which is most accurately translated as: “the Word became flesh and ‘tabernacled’ among us” (LaSor 76).

Part 2: The Characters of Exodus

Paramount to the events of Exodus is the life and work of Moses, who is by turns a prophet, a lawgiver, a governor, and a savior. Deemed the penultimate prophet of Judaism, belief in Moses’ message is listed amongst Rambam’s 13 Essentials of the Jewish Faith (Rich). His writings, which comprise the Pentateuch, are revered by Jews above all other sacred writings. Because of this, he is traditionally called “Moshe Rabbeinu”, or Moses the Rabbi; a name that has a numerical value of <https://assignbuster.com/book-of-exodus-message-themes-characters-and-new-testament-context/>

613 – the same number of “ mitzvot”, or commandments, contained in the Torah (Rich). In addition, Jews consider Moses to be the only man to have seen God face-to-face (Deut. 34: 10) and to have spoken directly with Him (Num. 12: 8). For Christians, this tenant of Judaism is a foreshadowing of Jesus, who would assert that he and the Father (YHWH) are One. A Hebrew by birth, Moses escaped the Pharaoh’s death sentence when his clever mother (named Yocheved in Jewish tradition) and sister Miriam set him adrift in a small boat on the Nile River as a child. Discovered by Pharaoh’s daughter, he was given the name “ Moses”, which derives from a root meaning “ to draw out” (Ex. 2: 10). According to most scholars, this name is Egyptian in origin (LaSor 65), but some speculate that Moshe (Moses) is actually a Hebrew translation of the Egyptian word “ minios” “ drawn out” (Rich). Exodus does not record the name of the Pharaoh who was ruling at this time, but tradition has associated him with Raameses II. Most scholars agree that the cities of Pitham and Pi-Raamses (Ex. 1: 11) were built by Pharaoh Rameses II, making him the most common suspect as the Pharaoh of Exodus. If the widely accepted dating of the Exodus to the mid-13h century is correct, then Raameses II would almost certainly be the Pharaoh with which Moses contended. Alternate datings based on information in 1 Kings 6: 1, however, have led other scholars to date the Exodus to 1447 B. C. (LaSor 60), which would disqualify Raameses II as Exodus’ Pharaoh. While the Pharaoh plays a villainous role in the narrative of Exodus, there is an important spiritual lesson that can be learned from his situation. After each plague, Pharaoh’s heart is said to be “ hardened”, preventing him from responding to Moses’ demands. Perhaps this is intended as an illustration that when a person’s heart is closed to God, he or she is unable to hear His

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Words or properly respond to his Will. Regardless of Pharaoh's nefarious reputation, it is probable that the lifestyle of his court was one of Moses' earliest influences. Raised as an Egyptian prince, Moses would have been highly educated, literate, and capable of military leadership (LaSor 65). This makes plausible the traditional designation of Moses as the author of the Torah, as well as his alleged administrative skills. A familiarity with the literary forms of the time is demonstrated in Exodus 15: 1-18, in which Moses composes a triumphant song to celebrate God's deliverance of the Israelites at the " Sea of Reeds". Significantly, the " Song of Moses" differs from other poetry of its time in that its focus is exclusively on YHWH, rather than the exploits of human champions and warriors (LaSor 72). This sensitivity to Hebrew culture is best explained by Exodus 2: 7-10, which reports that Pharaoh's daughter hired Moses' mother to act as his nurse. It is reasonable to assume that Moses' mother would have instilled in him an appreciation for his Hebrew heritage, if through nothing else than through the customs of her daily life. There is little doubt that Moses was poignantly aware of his ethnicity, as evidenced in his outrage at seeing a Hebrew slave beaten in Exodus 2: 11-12. In his anger, the Bible tells us, Moses slew the Egyptian and then fled into the wilderness of Midian, where he took up residence with a local priest named Jethro. In Midian, Moses worked as a shepherd, tending Jethro's flocks, and eventually married the priest's Ethiopian daughter, Zipporah. It was during this period that Moses encountered the " Burning Bush" through which God spoke to him. After electing Moses to be His Prophet and Deliverer, God reveals to Moses one of the Divine Names: " I AM". According to LaSor, page 66, a person's name in ancient times was descriptive of their attributes, so God is here asserting his

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ontological superiority, as well as his nearness to and accessibility by his people. As is often the case, it is not clear why God chose Moses to act as his representative, especially when the Bible says in Exodus 4: 10 that Moses was not an eloquent speaker. One Jewish midrash, as related in “ Judaism 101” by Tracy R. Rich, speculates that Moses’ dedication to Jethro’s flocks of sheep was the trait that led YHWH to select him to guide the flocks of Israelites. The story, as Rich presents it, tells of a time when Moses was taking the sheep to the watering hole and one particular lamb did not come. Leaving the rest of the flock behind, Moses went back to the stray lamb, put it on his shoulders, and carried it to the water so that it could drink. While this story may be folklore, it profoundly parallels Jesus’ parable of the lost sheep in Luke 15. This would be appropriate, because as a savior figure, Moses prefigures the work of Christ. Just as Moses delivered the Israelites from bondage in Egypt, Christ released all of humanity from bondage in sin. While Moses’ relationship with God is astounding, his life was riddled with challenges. His lack of faith in receiving water from a stone prevented his entrance into the very Promised Land that he had worked so hard to reach (Num. 20: 7-13). Precisely what transgression he committed in striking the stone twice to receive water is unclear, but it is typically understood as indicative of Moses’ impatience or frustration. In addition, I suggest two alternate explanations that might shed some light on the situation. One is that Moses’ aggravated statement in verse 10 – “ must we fetch you water” – suggests that for a moment he thought of himself, rather than YHWH, as the source of blessing. The other possibility that occurs to me is that the smiting of the rock and the outpouring of water was meant to prefigure Jesus smitten on the cross, with the water flowing from his side (John 19: 34).

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However, Jesus was smote only once and for all time, and thus Moses' striking the rock twice ruins what could have been a Christological image. It may be easy to judge Moses for his eventual frustration with the journey out of Egypt, but considering the level of stress he was under, he performed remarkably - almost flawlessly - as a leader. Exodus 18: 13-26 seems to indicate that he suffered immense pressure in trying to judge fairly all of the problems that arose among the Israelites, as hinted at by Jethro's ominous observation that Moses would "surely wear away" if he did not seek administrative assistance (18: 18). To alleviate the strain on Moses, Jethro suggested the institution of a basic judicial system - a proposal which Moses readily accepted. In addition, Moses regularly received help from Aaron, whom God appointed to serve as the Israelites' spokesperson due to Moses' lack of verbal gravitas (Ex 4: 10). Working on the assumption that Aaron was Moses' older brother, Jewish scholars believe Aaron was born prior to the slaughter of Hebrew children (Rich). Aside from his role as diplomat, Aaron also served as the first of the Levitical Priesthood, and functioned as the center of Israel's religious life during the Exodus; thus, the meaning of his name, "exalted one" (Molloy 283). This role becomes especially important after the construction of the Tabernacle, when routine sacrifices and religious duties become central to Israelite life. As the High Priest, Aaron would have been the only individual permitted to enter the Holy of Holies and come into the direct presence of God with the Yom Kippur offering. In Jewish tradition, it is thought that Aaron's success both as a priest and as a diplomat was due to his love for peace (Rich). Writing in the Talmud, the Rabbi Hillel is quoted as saying: "Be disciples of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing peace, loving people and drawing them near the Torah" (Rich). This <https://assignbuster.com/book-of-exodus-message-themes-characters-and-new-testament-context/>

sentiment is played out in Aaron's role as intercessor on the Day of Atonement, making peace between the people and God for the coming year. Unfortunately, this trait may have been responsible for Aaron's willingness to go along with the people's desire to build the golden calf at the foot of Mt. Sinai (Ex 32: 22). Like Moses, Aaron did not enter the Land of Canaan, but died while traveling in the desert. Completing the three-part leadership team of the Exodus is Moses' and Aaron's elder sister, Miriam. Spoken of as a "prophetess" in Exodus 14: 12, Miriam is the first woman in the Bible to be given this title and to be depicted in a leadership position. No doubt she was well-suited to the task, given her cleverness in engineering the events that saved Moses' life in Exodus 2, as well as her courage in approaching Pharaoh's daughter with the proposal that Moses' mother serve as his nursemaid. What level of education she would have had as a Hebrew slave is unclear, but Exodus 15: 20 indicates that she had some musical skill. Verse 21 describes Miriam as leading the women of Israel in song and dance, but the words of her song merely echo the first verse of Moses' composition, suggesting that she did not write her own music. Like her brothers, Miriam enjoyed an impeccable relationship with YHWH, yet she erred during the journey to Canaan. Numbers relates how Miriam, along with Aaron, challenged Moses' prophetic leadership and criticized his decision to marry an Ethiopian woman. Miriam's name, which means "rebellion" (Molloy 283), seems to indicate that she was predisposed to antiauthoritarian tendencies. In response to her chronic complaining, God punished Miriam with leprosy, which resulted in her being "disfellowshipped" from the Israelite community. Fortunately, Aaron interceded on her behalf, and implored God to remove the disease from his sister. YHWH relented, and Miriam was accepted back

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into the Israelites' camp, although she, too, was ultimately excluded from the Promised Land. One could make the argument that the story of Miriam's leprosy contains Christological overtones sin results in a person's separation from the community of believers, but the intercession of Christ (prefigured here in Aaron) results in the restoration of the sinner.

Part III: Evaluation - Exodus in a Christian Context

For Christians, the ramifications of the Book of Exodus reach far beyond the Torah. As the Apostle Paul asserts in Colossians 2: 17, the events of Jewish history are "the shadow of things to come" - like the silhouettes cast on the wall's of Plato's cave, they merely hint at the fullness of reality that is manifest in Christ. In Matthew 8: 4, he explicitly instructs a man to present himself in the Temple and "offer the gift that Moses commanded." In Matthew 17, Christ conferences with both Moses and the Hebrew prophet Elias during his supernatural transfiguration, and in Mark 12: 26 Christ directly quotes from the "Book of Moses," reciting an event from Exodus. Point by point, the life of Christ parallels and expands on the story of Exodus. Matthew makes this especially obvious in his Gospel, which was written for a Jewish audience (Middendorf 48). Matthew begins building his comparison in chapter 2, in which he reports that like Moses, Jesus' childhood involved a narrow escape from a king's massacre of young Jewish males. As a result, the family of Christ flees into Egypt, only to return to Judea after the death of King Herod. In verse 2: 15, Matthew explicitly invokes the Exodus with a prophetic quote "out of Egypt I have called my son." In Matthew 3: 13, Jesus passes through the River Jordan by way of baptism, mirroring the passage through the Sea of Reeds. Immediately thereafter, he is driven into the wilderness (4: 1), where he wanders for forty days and faces temptation. Clearly, the forty years that Israel spent in the

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wilderness was a foreshadowing of this event, although Christ improves upon the original story by resisting temptation, whereas Israel repeatedly falls into sin during its “ wilderness experience”. Matthew’s use of Exodus as a model for the story of Christ reaches a crescendo in chapter 5, when Christ delivers the Sermon on the Mount. As the traditional name of the discourse implies, the placement of this event in Matthew’s narrative is intended to bring to mind Moses’ reception of the Law on Mt. Sinai. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus reveals the Will of God for his people, just as Moses had done centuries earlier. Like Matthew, John also draws on the imagery of Exodus in the sixth chapter of his Gospel. In v. 6: 31, Christ compares himself to the manna which God provided the Israelites during their journeys in the desert. In calling Himself the “ Bread of Life,” Jesus asserts that he is God’s provision to a spiritually starved humanity. Because of this, some scholars believe that the four words used to describe the manna in Exodus 16 (“ small,” “ round,” “ white,” and “ sweet”) contain Christological overtones (Jesus in the manna). Smallness indicates the humility that Christ showed in his ministry, particularly in his passion. Because a round circle has no beginning or ending, it may be taken as a metaphor for eternity, depicting the deity of Christ and his everlasting reign. Whiteness represents spiritual and moral purity, and sweetness uses the sense of taste to describe the joy that comes through Jesus’ presence. Like salvation, manna was a free gift given from Heaven as an expression of God’s covenant with his people. Exodus deals heavily with the theme of “ covenant” established in Genesis. It represents the fulfillment of God’s promises to Abraham and sets the stage for Israel’s invasion of the Land of Canaan. Many believe that Israel was delivered by obeying the Law, but this is incorrect. Notice the sequence of events: God

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delivers Israel first, and then the Law is given as a means of living in response to a salvation that has already been given. Thus, the doctrine of Sola Gratia is present even in the Torah. The final events of the departure from Egypt are strikingly sacramental in their imagery – the Israelites partake of unleavened bread (reminiscent of Communion) and then proceed through the sea, bringing to mind the waters of Baptism. Sequentially, the presentation of these images indicates their respective roles in the salvation process – the blood of the Passover Lamb brings salvation, the unleavened bread commemorates the event, and the passage through water marks the transition from slavery to freedom. In a broader sense, the Book of Exodus attests to the faithfulness of God, even in the face of doubt and backsliding. Called a “ covenant narrative” (Motyer), the Exodus brings to fruition the pledges that God made to Abraham, while looking ahead to the glory of Christ. For contemporary readers living in an age of doubt, the epic redemption of the Israelites teaches believers that we can stand firmly on our covenant with the Lord, knowing that he will not renege on his promises. As Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 1: 10, God is the one “ who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us.” Further, Exodus demonstrates that miracles often take time – sometimes as long as forty years – which requires a faith that is tempered with patience. Yet even in the face of chronic sin, as occurred during the Wilderness Wanderings, God remains faithful and does not abandon his elect. This, then, is the most enduring message of Exodus: that no matter how many years or how many sordid paths it may take, we can remain confident in the knowledge God will “ never leave us, nor forsake us”

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