

How does exodus story reflect gods presence religion essay



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In many ways the narrative of Exodus Chapters 1-15 may be considered the birth story of Israel as a people. The book of Exodus opens with Israel suffering oppressively as slaves in Egypt, but in the end of the story (Exodus 14-15), the hand of God delivered them through the Reed Sea to a new life beginning at Mt. Sinai where they will become God's covenant people. 1

1 Bruce C. Birch, Walter Brueggeman, Terence E. Fretheim & David L. Petersen A Theological Introduction to the Old Testament Nashville, TN: Abingdom Press, 1999. P. 93

Verses 1-6 sum up the history of Israel as a clan, as described more thoroughly in Genesis chapters 12-50. These six verses remind us that all that is going to take place in Exodus is directly related to what has gone before as described in Genesis. The curse of God in Genesis 3 included hard toil, which is surely the lot of Israel in Egypt. The salvation of mankind, as promised also in Genesis 3, was through the birth of a child. So too it was through the birth of a child (Moses, Exod. 2) that God provided a deliverer for His people. As men strove to provide themselves with security and significance by the building of a city and a tower, using bricks and mortar, so Egypt sought to secure herself by forcing the Israelites to build cities with bricks and mortar (compare Gen. 11 with Exod. 1: 14; 5: 1).

Most importantly, this portion of the introduction to the Book of Exodus (Exod. 1: 1-6) links the existence and rapid growth of Israel as a nation to the covenant that God made with Abraham (Gen. 12: 1-3), which He reiterated to the patriarchs (Gen. 26: 2-5, 24; 28: 13-15). The close of the Book of Genesis anticipated the situation existing at the opening of the

Book of Exodus. A numerous people had developed from the twelve sons of Jacob. The Land had been promised to Abraham's descendants to be occupied when a people sufficient to inhabit and control it was ready. Exodus is the account of the final stage toward that readiness. It is the book of the birth of two special sons: Moses, the son of a couple from the tribe of Levi (2: 1-2), and Israel, the firstborn son of the Most High God.

Having become a numerous people, God brings forth a fledgling nation, created by His sovereign grace and cared for out of His steadfast love (1: 1-18: 27). The Exodus from Egypt constitutes the birth of God's Son-Nation (1: 1-15: 21). Israel had been segregated in the land of Goshen as part of the divine plan for creating a unique people from the descendents of Abraham (Gen. 46: 28-34) and had become a basically homogeneous entity over the course of the 430-year sojourn in Egypt. Harsh treatment by a Pharaoh unsympathetic to the children of Israel hurried the crisis that would result in their expulsion from the womb of Egypt.

Yahweh for his part provides and prepares his deliverer for the eventual deliverance of the nation from Egyptian bondage (2: 1-4: 31). At this point the birth of the deliverer, Moses, becomes the focus of the book. Moses is "cast out" by his mother and then taken in by none other than Pharaoh's daughter. As Egypt had been used providentially to care for the clan of Abraham so the King of Egypt would afford a Hebrew child the best that the country had to offer in terms of upbringing and education (2: 1-10). However, before Moses could lead Israel out of Egypt he himself had to experience exile as he fled from a fearful Pharaoh until God is ready to deliver His people from under a hostile, oppressive king (2: 11-4: 17).

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Finally, Moses is appointed as Israel's deliverer (3: 1-4: 17). The appointment of Moses to his task occurs in three phases. All three stages were necessary in order to galvanize this 80 years old man to act on behalf of the LORD God of his father's (3: 15). First, Moses is confronted with the holiness of Yahweh at the burning bush as the mountain of God (3: 1-5). Secondly, Moses is assured of the loyal love of Yahweh for his people and called to participate in it (3: 6-10). The third phase consisted of Yahweh dispelling four objections that Moses raises regarding his own inadequacy for the task (3: 11-4: 17), each objection being countered by some aspect of Yahweh's person or purpose. Finally, Aaron is appointed as Moses " Spokesman" (4: 14).

By divine revelation God instructed Aaron to meet Moses in the wilderness (4: 27). They met on the holy mountain of God. Where Moses had to share the most recent events of his life, especially his encounter with God at the burning bush, the commission he had been given to deliver Israel, and the part which Aaron was to play in it all. Together they both went back to Egypt to petition Pharaoh for the release of Yahweh's " firstborn" Israel (4: 18-31). This image underscores the fact that the nation of Israel already existed in relationship to God.

The impact of God's presence can be seen in the shown down of the ten plaques as well as the crossing of the Reed Sea. Upon Pharaoh's first refusal to let Israel go Yahweh reveals his plans for judging unbelief and encouraging the faith of the Israelites (5: 1-6: 1). God was about to reveal himself in the characteristic embodied in the name YHWH. The purpose of the first encounter was realized, and life got tougher. However, Israel was not yet ready to take YHWH at his word (6: 9). With Moses and Aaron already

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being stretched in their faith, the Lord reissues the command to go to Pharaoh and demand release for Israel (6: 10-11). When they object, the Lord restates his expectations (6: 13) along with an explanation of his strategy (6: 28- 7: 7). As one who stands in the place of God to Pharaoh (7: 1) Moses will have a ringside seat to the struggle of the unbelieving heart. It is through the stubbornness of this Pharaoh that Yahweh will effect deliverance to Israel, and manifest himself to the whole nation of Egypt (7: 4-5). Moses and Aaron did respond to the revelation of God's plan and submit to his command (7: 6).

In the second encounter with Pharaoh Moses announces plagues against the land and its gods in order to secure Israel's release (7: 8-10: 29). The plagues against Egypt were miraculous interventions of the sovereign God of the universe. They were designed to demonstrate the uniqueness of the God of Israel and to deliver the people of Israel from their oppressive "hosts." The whole pantheon of Egyptian gods, not least of which was the Pharaoh himself, was being shown to be impotent in the presence of the God of Israel. Finally, Moses' last encounter with Pharaoh was the announcement of the plague of the death of all Egypt's firstborn, along with the institution of the Passover (11: 1-12: 36). The tenth plague is set apart from the nine because it is the decisive act of judgment against Pharaoh and the Egyptians, and also it would hold special historical and theological significance for Israel throughout their history through its association with the Passover (12: 1-28). The Hebrews' calendar would now name this as the first month (12: 2). The feast would be an everlasting memorial of redemption (12: 14) and would

remind the nation that her oppressor had been judged for its unbelief (12: 23, 27).

In addition the associated feast of Unleavened Bread would remind them of their deliverance in haste from Egypt unto a prolonged experience under the blessing of Yahweh. Redemption by blood (from the guilt of sin) on the night of Passover would be matched by redemption by power (from the death of slavery) at the Reed Sea. As promised, the tenth plague is inflicted and the firstborn of man and beast dies (12: 29-30) forcing Pharaoh to comply with Yahweh's command, with the consent of the rest of the Egyptians (12: 31-36).

Though the physical "exodus" of the people is not really completed at this point, the narrative recounts the first movement of the nation (12: 37).

Before resuming the actual "exodus" narrative, additional material is communicated, from the Lord to Moses (12: 43-13: 2) and from Moses to the people (13: 3-16) concerning the Feasts of Passover and Unleavened Bread, and the sanctification of the firstborn. These become the memorials of Israel's redemption from Egypt.

Having been spared in the Passover by the blood of the lamb, Israel experiences the completion of her deliverance out of bondage by the power of God as he destroys the pursuing Egyptians (13: 17-15: 21) portraying him as a divine warrior (15: 3) in their song of liberation.

Finally, in assessing how God dealt with the characters in the narratives, He chooses Joseph to begin Israel's migration to Egypt (Gen. 50: 19-20; Exodus

1: 5); Pharaoh King of Egypt so as to demonstrate his sovereignty (1: 8); <https://assignbuster.com/how-does-exodus-story-reflect-gods-presence-religion-essay/>

Shiphrah and Puah to disregard the Pharaoh's decree (1: 15); Jochebed to birth Moses (2: 2); hide him (2: 3) and nursed him (2: 9); Pharaoh's daughter to adopt and raise Moses (2: 5-10); Miriam's to keep watch over Moses (2: 4); Moses as Israel's deliverer (3: 10); Aaron as Moses' spokesman (4: 14); Zipporah, Moses' wife to perform circumcision on their son to save Moses from the wrath of God (4: 25-26); and Jethro, Moses' father-in-law to confess that Yahweh is Supreme (18: 9-12).

The statement about God hardening Pharaoh's heart is often characterized as unfair on the part of the Divine Sovereign with respect to allowing for repentance and faith (4: 21; 7: 3; 9: 12). However, it must be observed that Pharaoh hardened his own heart at least seven times (7: 13, 14, 22; 8: 15, 19, 32; 9: 7) before the Lord took similar action (9: 12). Pharaoh was responsible for his own unbelief and therefore fell under the righteous judgment of God. The Lord's hardening of Pharaoh's heart (after the monarch's unbelief was settled) served to heighten the judgment of the plagues so as to more effectively display His own power and majesty, which in the long run may have actually brought others to repentance.
