

## Chapter 5: Exodus

### Key Terms

- Decalogue: the Ten Commandments
- Documentary Hypothesis: an approach to the authorship of the Pentateuch associated with source criticism that understands the five books as a patchwork composition of four (or more) literary documents
- divine oracle formula: introductory statement indicating direct speech from God to a human agent
- Enlightenment: a philosophical movement of the eighteenth century marked by rejection of traditional social, religious, and political ideas and emphasizing rationalism and scientific methods (equated with modernism)
- exodus: the event in which Yahweh rescued Israel from slavery in Egypt
- miracle: divine intervention in human affairs, either in the superseding of natural law or in the intensification and timing of natural events
- Passover: a feast of unleavened bread that signifies the haste with which Israel left Egypt; the Passover event occurred when Yahweh's messenger brought death to the firstborn of all those who did not have blood from a sacrificial lamb smeared on their doorposts
- ten plagues: supernatural events that Yahweh used to display his power to the Egyptians and convince them to free Israel

### Key Ideas

- Yahweh is supreme over pagan deities.
- The exodus is a redemptive event for ancient Israel.
- The Mosaic law is a religious and social charter for Israel.
- The presence of God is symbolized in the tabernacle.

### Chapter Summary

Exodus continues the narrative of Israel's early history in Egypt and follows the story of the Israelites up to their formation into a nation at Sinai. The real hero of the story is not Moses, but Yahweh, who keeps his promises to Abraham. The exodus from Egypt is the primary redemptive event of the OT.

Tradition attributes the book of Exodus to Moses; modern scholars grant varying degrees of responsibility to Moses as writer, but most acknowledge Moses as the source of the material found in Exodus. Those who accept the Documentary Hypothesis attribute the final redaction of the book to a priestly writer during or after the exile. The authors of this text argue that the material in Exodus primarily originated with Moses, but that he did not compile the book into its present form.

The historical period narrated by Exodus spans approximately eighty-five years. However, scholars have struggled to determine the approximate date of the exodus, primarily because only two Egyptian pharaohs ruled for more than forty years (the duration of Moses' exile in the wilderness). The argument for an early or late date rests primarily on one's interpretation of the numbers recorded in the Bible, as well as extrabiblical historical and archeological information.

Geographical considerations further complicate our understanding of the exodus as we try to reconstruct the route taken by the Israelites. The authors of this text prefer the traditional southern route, which most convincingly accommodates the biblical and geographical information.

Exodus explains how the Israelites came to be enslaved in Egypt and were later delivered; reveals the character of God, who keeps his promises to the patriarchs and adopts Israel as his covenant people; and instructs the Israelites in how to maintain their covenant relationship with Yahweh. The book of Exodus divides into the narratives of Israel in Egypt, their journey through the wilderness, and their sojourn at Sinai. Throughout Exodus, God progressively reveals more of his person and character to Abraham's offspring and establishes his presence in their midst.