

# Introduction to the Book of Exodus

## Overview

### The Place of Exodus in the Pentateuch

Exodus is the second book in the Pentateuch, the five books of Moses. These five books reflect a series of promises that God made to the Abraham in Genesis:<sup>1</sup> the land, the seed, the blessing (a relationship with God), and worldwide dominion (Table 1). For example,

Gen 12:1 Now the LORD had said unto Abram,  
Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a **land** that I will shew thee:  
2 And I will make of thee a **great nation**, and **I will bless thee**, and make thy name great;  
and be thou a blessing:  
3 And **I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee**: and in thee shall **all families of the earth** be blessed.

Gen. Chapter	12	13	15	17	18	22
Land of Canaan: Numbers	x	x	x	x		x
Seed: Genesis	x	x	x	x	x	x
Blessing: Exodus, Leviticus	x		x	x		x
Nations: Deuteronomy	x			x		x

Table 1: The Four Facets of the Promise

- Genesis focuses on the seed.
- Exodus and Leviticus focus on the blessing.
- Numbers focuses on the land.
- Deuteronomy anticipates Israel's rule over the nations.<sup>2</sup>

### The Structure of Exodus

The first four chapters of Exodus present a series of events in the life of Moses that anticipate the more detailed experiences of Israel in chapters 4-40 (Table 2).

These parallels help identify the overall flow, but do not reflect the distribution of space in the book. The first panel contains only 76 verses, while the second occupies 1156, or a total of 1232. Within the second panel (Figure 1, chart),

Theme	First Panel, 1:1-4:17	Second Panel, 4:18-40:38
Entering Egypt	1:1-7, The eleven tribes go to Egypt and multiply	4:18-31, Moses returns to Egypt with his family
Oppression	1:8-22, Pharaoh oppresses Israel	5:1-23, Pharaoh increases the oppression
Leaders raised up	2:1-4, Moses born	6:1-27, Moses and Aaron commissioned by God
Moses in Pharaoh's Palace	2:5-10, Moses in Pharaoh's palace as the son of Pharaoh's daughter	6:28-13:16, Moses in Pharaoh's palace as deliverer
Travel to Horeb	2:11-15, Moses flees from Egypt to Midian	13:17-17:7, Israel travels from Egypt to Sinai
Conflict	2:16-17, Moses overcomes the shepherds	17:8-16, Moses overcomes Amalek
Moses and Jethro	2:18-22, Moses' Midianite family	18:1-27, Moses' Midianite family
Encounter with God at Horeb	2:23-4:17, Moses called to serve God "upon this mountain," 3:12	19:1-40:38, At Horeb, Israel enters covenant with God

Table 2: Moses as the Forerunner of Israel

1 Clines (*The Theme of the Pentateuch*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic press, 1997) emphasizes the land, the seed, and the blessing; for the dominion, see <https://cyber-chapel.org/sermons/special/christmas/notes/Christmas11ThePromise.pdf>

## Introduction to Exodus

1056 verses, more than 85% of the book, are in three sections: Moses' signs before Pharaoh (ch. 6-13), the journey from Egypt to Sinai (including the victory at the Red Sea) (ch. 13-17), and the events at Sinai (ch. 19-40). This last section occupies 719 verses, 58% of the total, of which 144 (ch.20-23) summarize God's commands for the people, and 457 (37%) concern the tabernacle and its priests.

Figure 2 compares the three dominant themes (Moses and Pharaoh, Travel to Horeb, With God at Horeb) with everything else in the book. Exod 3:12, at the end of the first panel, anticipates the climactic focus on the tabernacle:

Exo 3:12 And he said, Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, **ye shall serve God upon this mountain.**

The verb "serve" in this verse (עָבַד *ʿabad* G5647) reflects, as often, religious service (and is so translated in the LXX<sup>3</sup>). The parallel structure, together with the allocation of space, shows that a major purpose of the book is to bring Israel into covenant with the Lord and provide them with a sanctuary in which to worship him. Leviticus then goes on to provide the instruction manual for the tabernacle, describing how the priests are to conduct this sacred service.

A major lesson from the repetition in Table 2 is that Moses is the forerunner of his people. In 4:8-40:38, they replicate his experience in 1:1-4:7. Moses knew that he was a type of the coming Messiah:

Deu 18:15 The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken;

Moses was a forerunner, blazing the path to Mount Horeb (Sinai), so that later he could lead his people back to Horeb to enter into covenant with God and build the tabernacle where he would dwell with them. So the NT presents our Lord as our forerunner to the heavenly holy of holies, where we will one day enter personally:

Heb 6:19 Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; 20 Whither the **forerunner** is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

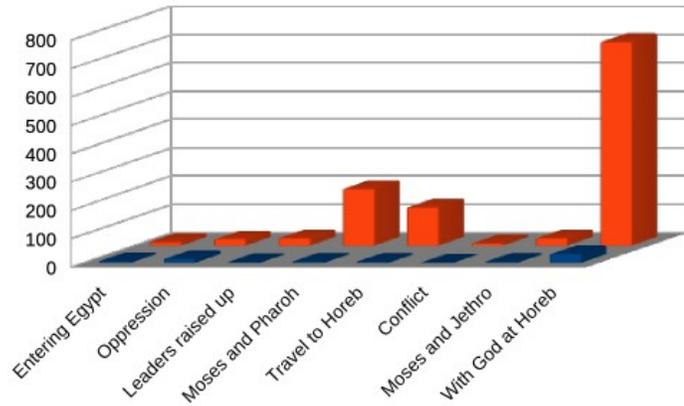


Figure 1: Law of Proportion in Exodus

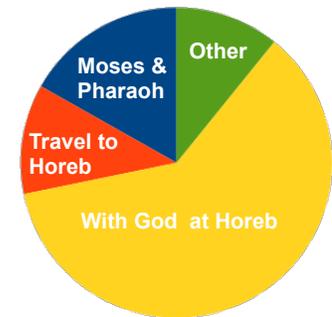


Figure 2: Major themes in Exodus

2 The word גוֹיִם *goyim*, plural of גוי *goy* H1471, appears 13x in Deuteronomy, 1.43 times per 1000 words. The corresponding counts and densities for the other books are Genesis 17x (0.53), Exodus 2x (0.08), Leviticus 5x (0.27), and Numbers 4x (0.16).

3 λατρεύω *latreuō* G3000

## The Date of Exodus and Duration of the Exodus

It will be useful for us to have some idea of the time and duration of the events of this book. 1 Kings dates the construction of Solomon's temple from the Exodus (chart):

1Ki 6:1 And it came to pass in the **four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt**, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month Zif, which is the second month, that he began to build the house of the LORD.

Synchronisms between the reigns of Israel's kings and secular history identify this year as about 966 BC, which would put the Exodus at 1446. An alternative view, based on Exo 1:11, puts it at about 1220, but has difficulty with 1 Kings 6:1.<sup>4</sup> We will discuss Exo 1:11 in its place.

There is some ambiguity concerning the duration of the Egyptian sojourn. God told Abraham it would last 400 years, a number that Stephen echoes in Acts 7:6:

Gen 15:13 And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them **four hundred years**;

However, Exodus mentions 430 years:

Exo 12:40 Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was **four hundred and thirty years**.<sup>41</sup> And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt.

Paul offers a resolution of these two durations (chart):<sup>5</sup>

Gal 3:17 And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was **four hundred and thirty years** after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.

Paul says that the 430 years is the interval between the covenant with Abraham and the covenant at Sinai. Gen 35:9-15 is the last recorded confirmation of the Abrahamic covenant, given to Jacob when he returned to Canaan after his years in Haran (chart).

Gen 35:9 And God appeared unto Jacob again, when he came out of Padanaram, and **blessed** him. 10 And God said unto him, Thy name is Jacob: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name: and **he called his name Israel**. 11 And God said unto him, I am God Almighty: **be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins**; 12 And **the land** which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give **the land**.

It contains the promise elements of the land, the seed, and the blessing. Exo 12:40 assigns 430 years, not just to Egypt, but to "the sojourning of the children of Israel," including Jacob's time in Canaan before going down to Egypt. The 400 years would then be the actual time in Egypt.

While Genesis reckons the actual time in Egypt, Exodus reckons from the renewal of the covenant, reinforcing our conclusion about the book's emphasis on Israel's covenant with God.

4 See discussion in C. Anderson and B. Edwards, *Evidence for the Bible* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2022), 198-200; B.G. Wood, "The Rise and Fall of the 13<sup>th</sup> Century Exodus-Conquest Theory." *JETS* 48/3 (September 2005) 475-89

5 Following H.W. Hoehner, "The Duration of the Egyptian Bondage," *BibSac* 126 (1969) pp. 306-316. See p. 310 for discussion of the four generations of Gen 15:16.

## Why is this Important?

Detailed discussions of chronology and geography sometimes seem pedantic and spiritually irrelevant. But the fact that Scripture gives us such details, and that it is possible to fit them into a coherent scheme, reminds us that we are dealing, not with “cunningly devised fables” (cf. 2 Pet 1:16), but with historical records. The prophets encourage Israel in Babylon with reminders of God’s provision in the Exodus.<sup>6</sup> Paul warns the Corinthians against idolatry based on God’s judgment on Israel after the golden calf (1 Cor 10:1-11). If these events were only folktales, these encouragements and exhortations would fall flat. Israel in Babylon should take courage because their God actually did deliver the nation once before from bondage. The Corinthians should fear God because he actually did judge Israel. Facts matter.

In addition, the difference between 400 and 430 years, showing the focus of Exodus on the covenant, holds the key to understanding a puzzle as we move into the next section of the book.

## Chapter 1, Descent to Egypt and Oppression

### 1-7<sup>7</sup>, Descent to Egypt and Increase

The book begins with a review of the children of Israel who entered Egypt, as recorded originally in Genesis 46.

**1 Now these are the names of the children of Israel, which came into Egypt; every man and his household came with Jacob.**—The names are given in birth order, except that children of Bilhah and Zilpah come later, and Dinah (who is not the head of a tribe) and Joseph with his children (who are already in Egypt) are not mentioned.

**2 Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah, 3 Issachar, Zebulun,**—Sons of Leah  
**and Benjamin,**—Son of Rachel

**4 Dan, and Naphtali,**—Sons of Rachel’s handmaid Bilhah  
**Gad, and Asher.**—Sons of Leah’s handmaid Zilpah

**5 And all the souls that came out of the loins of Jacob were seventy souls: for Joseph was in Egypt already.**—The detailed count is in Genesis 46.

This differs from Stephen’s account in Acts 7 (chart):

Act 7:14 Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to him, and all his kindred, threescore and fifteen souls.

Stephen follows the LXX, which in Gen 46:20 adds five children and grandchildren of Manasses and Ephraim to the total.<sup>8</sup>

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6 A convenient summary of references in Isa 40-55 is Bryan Estelle’s article, <https://www.wscal.edu/resources/article/the-exodus-motif-in-isaiah/>

7 Break after v. 7, per MT open paragraph (⊖)

8 Though these would have been born after Jacob came into Egypt, since Ephraim and Manasseh were still children when Jacob blessed them, <https://www.thetorah.com/article/jacobs-descendants-who-go-to-egypt-mt-versus-lxx>

**6 And Joseph died, and all his brethren, and all that generation.**<sup>9</sup>—By this time, the famine that brought Jacob’s family to Egypt is long over. They all knew at the outset that only five years of famine remained (chart):

Gen 45:9 Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt: come down unto me, tarry not: 10 And thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children's children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast: 11 And there will I nourish thee; **for yet there are five years of famine**; lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty.

Table 3 shows key events in the first century of the 430 years. Starting with the date and length of the overall Exodus from the introduction, we can derive the other dates. For example,

- Jacob enters Egypt 400 years before the Exodus, or 1446 + 400 = 1846, at the age of 130, after the seven years of plenty and two of the years of famine.
- So Joseph must have stood before Pharaoh nine years (7 + 2) earlier, in 1855, when we know he was 30.
- So Joseph’s death at age 110 must be 80 years later, or 1775.

Jacob returns to Canaan	1876	Gen 35:9-15	430 years before the Exodus
Joseph before Pharaoh; famine starts	1855	Gen 41:46	Age 30 Start of 7+7
Jacob goes to Egypt	1846	Gen 15:13	400 years before the Exodus
		Gen 45:11	After 7+2
		Gen 47:9	Age 130
Famine ends	1841		End of 7 + 7
Jacob dies	1829	Gen 47:28	Age 147
Joseph dies	1775	Gen 50:26	Age 110

Table 3: Chronological Data for the Early Egyptian Sojourn. Yellow cells are anchor dates from which others can be derived.

Figure 3 visualizes this timeline, and highlights an important question: If they came to Egypt because of the famine, why didn’t they go home when the famine ended? The family faced two conflicting incentives.

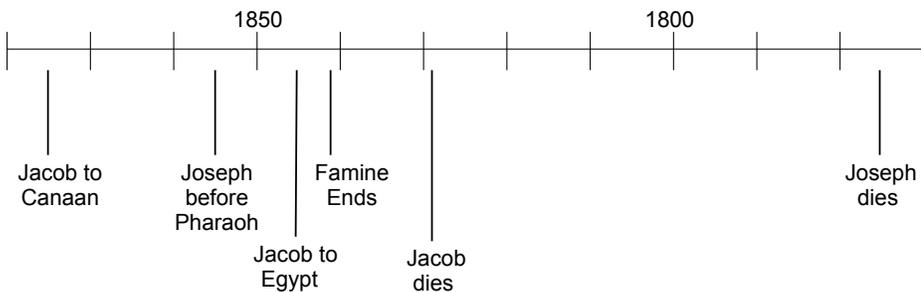


Figure 3: Chronology of the Early Exodus

On the one hand, Canaan was the land that God had promised

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Abraham went to Egypt in time of famine (Gen 12:10-20), but brought dishonor on himself by lying about Sarah. Isaac considered taking refuge in Egypt in a subsequent famine, but God forbade him (chart):

Gen 26:1 And there was a famine in the land, beside the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went unto Abimelech king of the Philistines unto Gerar. 2 And the LORD appeared unto him, and said, **Go not down into Egypt**; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of:

9 Good website for chronology of Israel and Egypt: <https://ready4eternity.com/estimating-josephs-timeline/>

## Introduction to Exodus

The renewal of the promise to Jacob in Genesis 35, when he returned to Canaan from Padan-Aram, is the starting point of the duration of 430 years, mentioned in Exod 12:40-41. Jacob thought enough of the promise to Abraham, and of the rebuke to Isaac, to inquire of God as he left Beersheba at the start of his trip to Egypt, and the Lord assured him,

Gen 46:4 I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes.

Jacob lived 17 years in Egypt, dying at 147. He might not have the strength at that age to rally his descendants to return to Canaan, but as he was dying, he charged them to bury him there:

Gen 49:29 And he charged them, and said unto them, I am to be gathered unto my people: **bury me with my fathers** in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite,

The funeral party represented most of Jacob's descendants:

Gen 50:7 And Joseph went up to bury his father: and with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt, 8 **And all the house of Joseph, and his brethren, and his father's house:** only their little ones, and their flocks, and their herds, they left in the land of Goshen.

If the brothers had valued God's covenant promise, this would have been an excellent time to move back to Canaan. But there was an opposing incentive.

Joseph, as senior advisor to Pharaoh, could not leave the country permanently, and his position guaranteed his brothers and their families a comfortable, carefree life. He was 39 years old when Jacob came to Egypt, and lived 81 more years, to 110. They had to choose between Canaan, under the protection of the covenant God who had promised the land to them, and the comforts of Egypt, under the protection of Joseph.

Moses faced the same choice about 400 years later. The story is recorded in chapter 2:

Exo 2:11 And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens: and he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren. 12 And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand. . . . 15 Now when Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to slay Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian: and he sat down by a well.

The writer to the Hebrews explains Moses' deeper choice:

Heb 11:24 By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; 25 **Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;** 26 Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.

The sons of Jacob chose the treasures of Egypt.

**7 And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them.**—At first, events vindicated their choice. Under Joseph's patronage, they were protected, and flourished.

Israel in Egypt under Joseph is like some politically active believers today who rely on sympathetic political leaders to protect them. That strategy works as long as the administration doesn't change. But eventually, it always does change, and it changed in Egypt.

## 8-22, Growth and Oppression

**8 Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph.**—It is reasonable to identify the new king with Aahmes I (also called Ahmose or Amosis), who reigned in the mid-16th century, ca. 1550 (chart).<sup>10</sup>

Egyptian history clarifies the significance of this king. About 1650, northern Egypt, where the Israelites lived, came under the control of foreigners known as the Hyksos. They came from Canaan, where the patriarchs lived. Linguistic and cultural ties would make them sympathetic to the Israelites. But the native Egyptians resented the foreign intruders, and fought against them. About 1550, Aahmes finally drove them out. When this happens, the ethnic similarity between the Hyksos and the Israelites naturally leads to suspicion:

**9 And he said unto his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we: 10 Come on, let us deal wisely with them; lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there falleth out any war, they join also unto our enemies, and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land.**—This historical background would perfectly explain the persecution described in the rest of this chapter.

Israel's experience in Egypt warns believers to be cautious about political associations.

Psa 146:3 **Put not your trust in princes**, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help.

Our Savior told Pilate,

Jhn 18:36 Jesus answered, **My kingdom is not of this world**: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.

Note the “now.” When he returns, he will rule with full political and military power. But until then, his statement is reinforced by the teaching and example of his apostles:

Rom 13:1 Let every soul **be subject unto the higher powers**. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. 2 Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.

1Pe 2:13 Submit yourselves to **every ordinance of man** for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; 14 Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well.

Again, it helps to reconstruct the timeline from biblical data (Table 4, Figure 5, chart).<sup>11</sup> Nearly 200 years elapse between Jacob's entry into Egypt and the emergence of Aahmes, whom we identify with the “new king, who knew not Joseph.” During this time the Hebrew population grows, but at the same time becomes more integrated with Egyptian society and less concerned with the promise of the covenant. It is time for God to awaken them, and he does this through persecution.

Pharaoh's strategy has three stages: hard labor, reproductive control, and finally, outright murder.

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10 J. Barton Payne, *An Outline of Hebrew History* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1954), 51. “Raamses” in v. 11 is a later name given to a city originally constructed under a different Pharaoh. Even assuming the late date for Exodus (1220 BC), Moses' birth (1359 BC) would come before the accession of the first Raamses to the throne (ca. 1290), so the city must have been built under a different name. See refs in note 4 above.

11 The date of Moses' birth, 80 years before the Exodus, is from the Exodus account itself. Stephen in Acts 7 gives his age at leaving Egypt for Midian as 40, following a common Jewish tradition.

### 11-14, Hard Labor

**11 Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom and Raamses.**—When the Hebrews fall into political disfavor, the very treasure they had enjoyed now becomes a burden to them.

**12 But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew.**<sup>12</sup> **And they were grieved because of the children of Israel.**—That is, they feared them.

**13 And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigour: 14 And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage [service], in mortar, and in brick,**

**and in all manner of service in the field:**—The Egyptians relied heavily on slave labor, and in the delta region, where Israel lived, most construction involved sun-baked mud bricks. A tomb painting from the time of the Exodus shows slaves of various ethnicities (differing in hair and skin color) making bricks, under overseers with rods to beat them into subjection (Figure 4, chart).<sup>13</sup>

**all their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigour.**—Verses 13-14 introduce a word family that dominates Exodus. The verb (עבד *abad* H5647) is uniformly translated “serve,” while

Jacob goes to Egypt	1846	Gen 15:13	400 yrs before Exodus
		Gen 45:11	After 7+2
		Gen 47:9	Age 130
Joseph dies	1775	Gen 50:26	Age 110
Oppression	~1550	Ex 1:8	Aahmes I
Moses born	1526	Ex 7:7	80 yrs before Exodus
Moses to Midian	1486	Acts 7:23	40 yrs before Exodus
Exodus	1446	1 Kings 6:1	480 yrs before temple

Table 4: Dating the Oppression and Birth of Moses

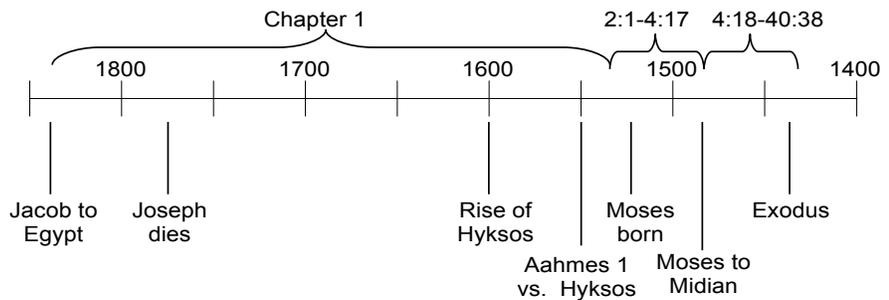


Figure 5: Internal Timeline of the Egyptian Sojourn

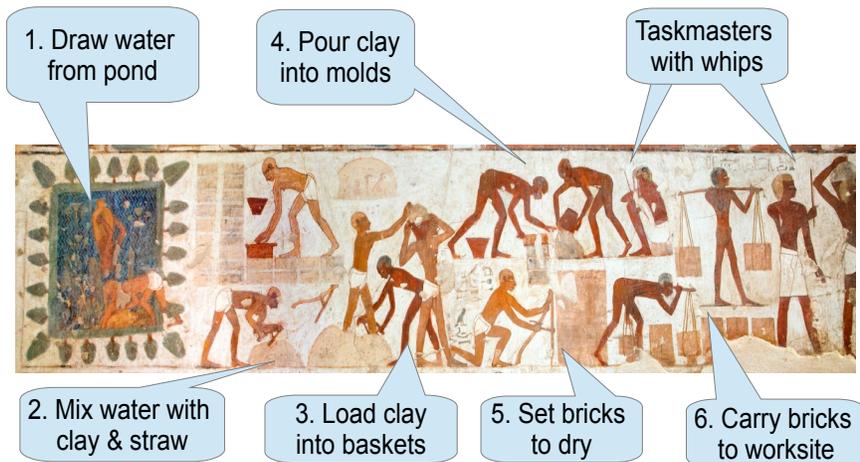


Figure 4: Slaves making bricks in Egypt just before the Exodus

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/mana4u/32513653582>

12 Cassuto notes the alliteration between “the more they multiplied” פֶּן יִרְבֶּה and v. 10 פֶּן יִרְבֶּה, “The king of Egypt said, ‘lest they multiply’ [pen-yirbe]; but the King of the universe said, ‘the more they shall multiply’ [ken yirbe].”

13 The scene is from the tomb of a senior official to Amenhotep II, Pharaoh of the Exodus, named Rekhmire, dated to about 1450 BC.

the noun (עבדה *abodah* H5656) is sometimes rendered “service” and sometimes “bondage.”<sup>14</sup>

Figure 6 (chart) shows the distribution of this word family in

Exodus. The basic movement is from serving the Egyptians (red dots) to serving the Lord (blue dots). In the middle (green dots),

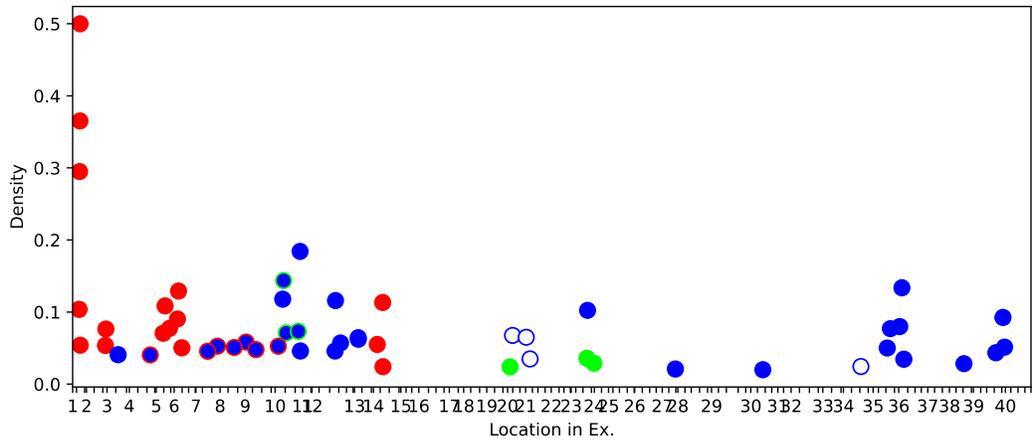


Figure 6: "To serve" *abad* and "service, bondage" *abodah* in Exodus. Recipient of service: Egyptians (red), the Lord (blue), other gods (green), daily labor (white). Red border: "let my people go, that they may serve me." Green border: "go, and serve the Lord your God."

Let's trace this trajectory in more detail. The initial peak of red dots is 1:13-14. The first blue dot is when God calls Moses at the burning bush.

Exo 3:12 When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, **ye shall serve God upon this mountain.**

When Moses returns to Egypt, God gives him a message for Pharaoh:

Exo 4:22 And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn: 23 And I say unto thee, **Let my son go, that he may serve me:** and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn.

Instances of this formula (Ex. 4:23; 7:16; 8:1, 20; 9:1, 13; 10:3) have red borders.

When Moses first delivers the message in 5:1<sup>15</sup>, Pharaoh increases the oppression, leading to more red dots in ch. 5-6. During the plagues, Moses repeats the message of 4:23, and Pharaoh replies, "Go, and serve the Lord," but with restrictions (green borders). First, he insists that the children and women<sup>16</sup> remain in Egypt:

Exo 10:11 Not so: **go now ye that are men, and serve the LORD;** for that ye did desire. And they were driven out from Pharaoh's presence.

Similarly, in 10:24, their flocks must stay behind.<sup>17</sup> Moses refuses both limitations.

Finally God slays the firstborn, as he had threatened in 4:23, and Pharaoh releases them without restriction (12:31). God institutes the passover, which he describes as a service that they are to observe (ch. 12-13). The last references to serving the Egyptians, in ch. 14, are on the shore of

14 A third member of the word family is "servant" (עָבַד *ebed* H5650), discussed in the notes.

15 Paraphrasing "serve" with "hold a feast"

16 Implied in the use of גִּבּוֹר *geber* H1397, with its emphasis on masculinity and strength

17 These two groups, the children and the flocks, are the ones that the nation voluntarily left behind in Gen 50:8 when they took Jacob back to Canaan for burial.

the Red Sea, where some Israelites question whether it might not have been better to stay and serve the Egyptians. But the Lord delivers them, and brings them to Sinai, where he gives the Ten Commandments. These constrain how they are to use their new liberty, in two ways.

First, they are not to serve other gods (green dots, 20:5, and its exposition in ch. 21-23).

Second, they are to abstain from their daily labor (white dots) on the Sabbath day (again, stated in 20:9, and expounded in ch. 21 and ch. 34).

From this point on, the noun “service” dominates (solid blue dots), describing the “service of the sanctuary,” the tabernacle. Delivered from service to Egypt, the nation is now serving the Lord.

Moses’ demand for freedom, and his refusal to accept Pharaoh’s limitations (no children, no animals), anticipates our Savior’s instruction (chart):

Mat 6:24 **No man can serve two masters:** for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other.

Moses’ words, “let my people go,” have been a rallying cry for freedom fighters in every age, but too often we neglect the second part of his demand: “that they may serve me.” Freedom from human oppression is not an end in itself, but the recognition that our first obligation is to serve the Lord. We are not set free so that we can do what we wish, but so that we can devote ourselves to the Lord. Thus Paul warns the Galatians,

Gal 5:13 For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty [set free from the bondage of sin]; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh [serving other gods], but by love serve one another [and thus, God, as the next verse explains:]. 14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

And to the Romans, he writes,

Rom 6:15 What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. 16 Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves **servants** to obey, his **servants** ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? 17 But God be thanked, that **ye were the servants of sin**, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. 18 **Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.** 19 I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members **servants to uncleanness** and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members **servants to righteousness** unto holiness.

## 15-21, Reproductive Control

**15 And the king of Egypt spake to the Hebrew midwives, of which the name of the one was Shiphrah, and the name of the other Puah:**—Apparently, and not surprisingly, Egyptian midwives would not tend to the needs of an enslaved underclass.

This is the first use of the word “Hebrew” (עִבְרִי *ibri* H5680) in Exodus, where it appears more often than anywhere else in the OT (14/34; next are 1 Samuel, 8x, and Genesis, 6x). It will be worthwhile to acquaint ourselves with this term. Two origins are proposed for the name (chart):<sup>18</sup>

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18 It was at one time common to identify עִבְרִי with Akkadian *Hab/piru* (foreigners, usually enslaved) or Ugaritic and Egyptian עִפְר (in both cases, lower-class, alien people, often slaves) (Cassuro on 1:15). However, the mismatch between Ugaritic and Egyptian /p/ and Hebrew /b/ makes this unlikely. See Rainey, *BAR* 34:06, Nov/Dec 2008, 51-55, and references there.

## Introduction to Exodus

- Like “Israelite” (descendant of Israel) and “Jew” (יהודי, descendant of Judah יהודה), it may mean “descendant of Eber” (Gen 10:24, 25), the fourth generation after Noah, six generations before Abraham (Figure 7). However, in the Bible, only Abraham and his descendants through Jacob bear this name.
- It may be derived from the Hebrew word עבר *abar* H6674, which means “to pass over, pass by, pass through,” describing a nomadic people.

Both derivations are useful, for Abram and his descendants were indeed nomadic.

The name emphasizes the ethnic distinctiveness of Abraham’s descendants. The first person called a “Hebrew” is Abraham, when he learned of Lot’s capture by the four kings:

Gen 14:13 And there came one that had escaped, and told **Abram the Hebrew**; for he dwelt in the plain of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol, and brother of Aner: and these were confederate with Abram.

Here it emphasizes his distinction from Mamre the Amorite and his brothers. The Amorites were descended from Ham through Canaan, not from Shem through Eber (Figure 7). The Amorites were the resident population of the land that God promised to Abraham. He is there as an alien, a foreigner, one who is “passing through.”

As Figure 7 shows, the Egyptians were also descended from Ham, through another of his sons. Potiphar’s wife describes Joseph to her servants and her husband as a Hebrew:

Gen. 39:14 That she called unto the men of her house, and spake unto them, saying, See, he hath brought in an **Hebrew** unto us to mock us;

Gen. 39:17 And she spake unto him according to these words, saying, The **Hebrew** servant, which thou hast brought unto us, came in unto me to mock me:

It is how the chief butler describes Joseph to Pharaoh:

Gen. 41:12 And there was there with us a young man, an **Hebrew**, servant to the captain of the guard; and we told him, and he interpreted to us our dreams;

In all these cases, the term has the sense of “foreigner” or “alien,” one of a different ethnicity.<sup>19</sup>

The use of the term to describe the midwives emphasizes that they are members of a foreign oppressed people. It also introduces a major theme of the book: the establishment of a particular physical people, not only as the family of a wandering shepherd, but as a nation that stands distinct among the other nations. Note the distribution of the term in Exodus (Figure 8, chart).

The reference to the midwives introduces a burst of references, contrasting Jacob’s family with the Egyptians. This peak ends with Moses’ flight from Egypt to Midian. By this point, we clearly understand the ethnic tension in the society.

<sup>19</sup> The name almost always appears in a description of the descendants of Abraham by, to, or with reference to a different ethnic group. It is used mostly in the nation’s early history, dominating in Exodus and Genesis, with some references in 1 Samuel in the conflicts with the Philistines. After the Exodus, the name “Israelite” predominates until the Babylonian captivity, and from the captivity to the end of the Bible, we read of the Jews (descendants of Judah).

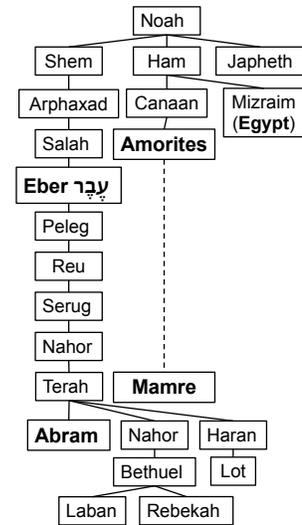


Figure 7: From Eber to Abram and Mamre

## Introduction to Exodus

The term next appears in ch. 3-10, always in the phrase “God of the Hebrews.” This name is part of Moses’ repeated demand to Pharaoh (3:18; 5:3; 7:16; 9:1, 13; 10:3). For example,

Exo 9:1 Then the LORD said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh, and tell him, “Thus saith the LORD **God of the Hebrews**, Let **my people** go, that they may serve me.”

Four times, this demand includes the words, “Let my people go.” It thus embodies two claims: that the one who calls himself I AM is distinctively their God, belonging to them, and that he claims them as “my people,” belonging to him. Now they are not just a distinct ethnic group, but they claim their own deity.

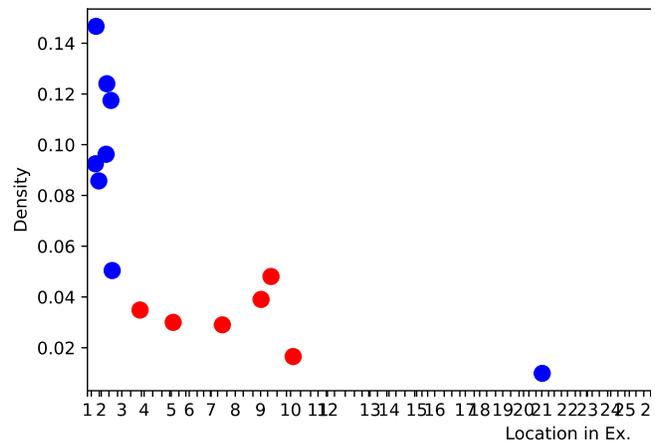


Figure 8: עברי H5680 in Exodus. Red: "God of the Hebrews"

Consider the two parts of this relation. (See note for further discussion.)

He had told Abraham that he would be their God:

Gen 17:7 And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, **to be a God unto thee**, and to thy seed after thee. 8 And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and **I will be their God**.

In calling Moses from the bush, he will describe them for the first time as “my people”:

Exo 3:7 And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of **my people** which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows;

Exo 3:10 Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth **my people** the children of Israel out of Egypt.

The final instance of the term, in Exod 21:2, distinguishes Hebrew servants from those of other peoples, giving ethnic Israelites a privileged place in the new nation’s laws.

Thus Moses uses the term not only to mark an ethnic distinction, but also to bring our attention to the covenant promise that God established with this particular group of people. This emphasis on the covenant will be important in understanding the behavior of the midwives.

**16 And he said, When ye do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew women, and see ~~them~~ upon the stools [look at the genitals];<sup>20</sup> if it be a son, then ye shall kill him: but if it be a daughter, then she shall live.**—Contrast “she shall live”<sup>21</sup> with the instructions to the people at large, after the midwives evade Pharaoh’s scheme, “every daughter ye shall save alive [cause to live].” Newborn girls are allowed to go on living, suggesting that Pharaoh wants the midwives to kill a boy before the parents knew that it was alive. In other words, they would fake a still-birth. If the mother knew that a son had been born alive, it would be very difficult for a murderous midwife to escape retribution from the parents.

20 Durham, Stuart. The lexicons do not recognize על ראה as “look upon,” but the idiom is clear in Ex 5:21.

21 Qal, vs. Piel in 1:22 (also in 1:17, 18)

**17 But the midwives feared God,**—This word “fear” also demands our attention (chart). This is the first instance in the Bible of someone “fearing God.” The expression is an objective genitive (God is the object of our fear; we fear God), and is extremely common throughout the Bible. In the Pentateuch, where it appears nearly 40x, almost every instance explicitly relates it to God’s word, including the very first, where Adam says,

Gen. 3:10 And he said, I heard **thy voice** in the garden, and **I was afraid**, because I was naked; and I hid myself.

Psa 19 includes “fear of the Lord” in a series of parallels that describe scripture:

Psa 19:7 The **law** of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the **testimony** of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. 8 The **statutes** of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the **commandment** of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. 9 The **fear** of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the **judgments** of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.

One of God’s great gifts to us is language, making it possible for him to reveal his thoughts to us and tell us how he wants us to live. But this gift should greatly sober us, for as long as we still wrestle with the “law of flesh” in our members, we risk falling short of his revealed will. The fear of God is our careful attention to seek out, understand, and obey God’s revelation.

This is not just an OT principle. Peter says, while urging us to love one another,

1Pet. 2:17 Honour all men. **Love** the brotherhood. **Fear God**. Honour the king.

Paul condemns those for whom

Rom. 3:18 There is **no fear of God** before their eyes.

and exhorts us,

2Cor. 7:1 Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the **fear of God**.

Eph. 5:21 Submitting yourselves one to another in the **fear of God**.

Phil. 2:12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation **with fear and trembling**.

Each of these texts speaks of our attitude toward the Lord in our daily lives, and 2 Cor 7:1 and Phil 2:12 relate it to God’s revelation. God chastens those whom he loves (Heb 12:6), and holds us accountable to his revelation. Knowing this, and fearing the discomfort it will bring, we strive to obey him day by day.<sup>22</sup>

**and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men children alive.**—This fear of God motivates the midwives to disobey the king and preserve the male children. But this behavior leads to a question: if the fear of God is a sense of responsibility to his word, what revelation did they have from God that would forbid them to kill the children? They did not yet have the ten commandments.

The answer may lie in their being Hebrews, those to whom God made the covenant promises. Prominent among these was the promise that God would make this people like the dust of the

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<sup>22</sup> 1 John 4:18 does not contradict this NT emphasis on fear. It is speaking, not of our careful conduct in daily life, but of fear in the time of judgment. See discussion at [https://cyber-chapel.org/sermons/1john/notes/1John\\_ThirdPanel.pdf](https://cyber-chapel.org/sermons/1john/notes/1John_ThirdPanel.pdf).

earth and the stars of the heaven. If you know that promise, and if you treasure it, the last thing you want to do is kill off the male children.

Their refusal to obey Pharaoh is not the result of “natural law” or a generic “creation theology.”<sup>23</sup> Other cultures actually thought that they should sacrifice their children to their gods. The midwives’ behavior reflects the promises to the patriarchs. Jacob and Joseph honored the promise of the land when they commanded that they be buried in Canaan, not in Egypt, and the midwives honored the promise of the seed when they refused to kill the baby boys.

**18 And the king of Egypt called for the midwives, and said unto them, Why have ye done this thing, and have saved the men children alive? 19 And the midwives said unto Pharaoh, Because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women; for they are lively, and are delivered ere the midwives come in unto them. 20 Therefore God dealt well with the midwives:—**If the midwives are lying to Pharaoh, how can God approve of their actions?

The term “lively” in v.19 may refer to cultural practice rather than physiology.

It is possible that at the time of the exodus, Egyptian women ... took a minimal role in delivering their own children. They may well have mainly lain back with their eyes closed during and perhaps immediately after childbirth and let midwives do all the rest. ...

By contrast, it may well have been the practice in Israel for women to play an active role in the delivery of their own children. ...

The final part of the verse, “they ... give birth before the midwives arrive,” could thus be perfectly true, perhaps in part because of a purposely slow arrival of the midwives as part of a quiet, widespread plot among Israelites to fool the Egyptians. Indeed, one can imagine the midwives, as part of this strategy, regularly informing Israelite women to do “everything possible to give birth before we are summoned to your home. We’ll take it from there. But whatever you do, don’t call for us before the baby actually comes.”<sup>24</sup>

In other words, they need not be lying, but are just very clever and resourceful (as Miriam will show herself in the next chapter).

**and the people multiplied, and waxed very mighty.**—The expression is repeated from 1:7, “multiplied and waxed exceeding mighty.” In spite of Pharaoh’s efforts the Hebrew population continued to grow.

**21 And it came to pass, because the midwives feared God, that he made them houses.**—It appears that the midwives were themselves childless. And since they appear to be representatives of the guild of midwives, it is likely that they are older. They have been faithful to the covenant, to protect the children of others, and now the Lord promises to give them children in their old age.

## 22, Outright Murder

**22 And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive.**—Recognizing that the scheme with the midwives isn’t working, Pharaoh seeks to involve the broader population. Anyone who sees a young boy is to throw him into the Nile, to drown or be eaten by the crocodiles.

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23 As Fretheim thinks.

24 Stuart, D. K. (2006). *Exodus* (Vol. 2, p. 81). Broadman & Holman Publishers.

## Introduction to Exodus

Pharaoh thinks he can accomplish his aims by sparing the daughters of Israel. But it is women who have blocked his initial effort to kill the baby boys, and the next element of the story shows how his plot is further frustrated by the actions of three more women, all described as “daughters”<sup>25</sup>—the daughter of Levi (Moses’ mother), her daughter (the sister of Moses), and the daughter of Pharaoh.

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25 Cassuto: “This word, which occurs at the end of chapter i, recurs here in the first verse and another five times in the continuation of the first paragraph — in all, seven times consecutively.”

## Notes

### Jacob's Family in the LXX

Jacob's family in Egypt at the beginning numbered 70 according to MT (Ex 1:5; Gen 46:27), but 75 according to the LXX (which is quoted by Stephen in Acts 7:14). The difference is accounted for by including the five grandchildren and great-grandchildren of Joseph named in Gen 46:20 LXX. This makes sense, giving Joseph seven descendants instead of two. But I cannot figure out why Gen 46:27 says that Joseph had nine souls born to him in Egypt!

[https://biblethingsinbibleways.wordpress.com/2020/08/31/how-many-came-to-egypt-70-or-75-genesis-4627-and-acts-714-contradiction-did-stephen-get-it-wrong/#:~:text=bore%20to%20him,%20\(-,Hebrew\),and%20Manasseh%20in%20the%20count](https://biblethingsinbibleways.wordpress.com/2020/08/31/how-many-came-to-egypt-70-or-75-genesis-4627-and-acts-714-contradiction-did-stephen-get-it-wrong/#:~:text=bore%20to%20him,%20(-,Hebrew),and%20Manasseh%20in%20the%20count) suggests that LXX includes Joseph and Asenath in the count.

### δοῦλος and ἰσχυρῶν

In discussing the semantic trajectory of service in Exodus, I suggest Rom 6 as a parallel. That passage focuses on the noun describing the servant, not the work done (service) or the verb (to serve). Table 5 shows that δοῦλος is dedicated for the noun ἰσχυρῶν, though by no means dominant for it. But within Exodus, the noun (43x) is most often translated θεράπων, and refers to Pharaoh's servants.

Whose servants are mentioned? And how does the LXX render them?

	ἰσχυρῶν	Total
δοῦλος	307	370
παῖς	337	460
οἰκέτ*	35	56
θεράπων	45	64
Total	803	

Table 5: δοῦλος and ἰσχυρῶν in LXX

### Moses and Israel as God's Servants

*These include the first and last instances of ἰσχυρῶν in the book.*

Ex. 4:10 And Moses said unto the LORD, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto **thy servant**: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue. θεράπων

Ex. 14:31 And Israel saw that great work which the LORD did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the LORD, and believed the LORD, and **his servant** Moses. θεράπων

Ex. 32:13 Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy **servants**, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever. οἰκέτης

### Israel as Pharaoh's Servants

*Never θεράπων "willing servant." Most often "bondslaves"*

Ex. 5:15 Then the officers of the children of Israel came and cried unto Pharaoh, saying, Wherefore dealest thou thus with **thy servants**? 16 There is no straw given unto **thy servants**,

and they say to us, Make brick: and, behold, **thy servants** are beaten; but the fault is in thine own people. οικήτης

Ex. 13:3 And Moses said unto the people, Remember this day, in which ye came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage [**servants**]; for by strength of hand the LORD brought you out from this place: there shall no leavened bread be eaten. δουλεία

Ex. 13:14 And it shall be when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What is this? that thou shalt say unto him, By strength of hand the LORD brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage [**servants**]: δουλεία

Ex. 20:2 I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage [**servants**]. δουλεία

## Pharaoh's Servants as distinct from Israel

*Notably, as suffering the plagues, often parallel with "thy people."*

Ex. 5:21 And they said unto them, The LORD look upon you, and judge; because ye have made our savour to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of **his servants**, to put a sword in their hand to slay us. θεράπων

Ex. 7:10 And Moses and Aaron went in unto Pharaoh, and they did so as the LORD had commanded: and Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and before **his servants**, and it became a serpent. θεράπων

Ex. 7:20 And Moses and Aaron did so, as the LORD commanded; and he lifted up the rod, and smote the waters that were in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh, and in the sight of **his servants**; and all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood. θεράπων

Ex. 8:3 And the river shall bring forth frogs abundantly, which shall go up and come into thine house, and into thy bedchamber, and upon thy bed, and into the house of **thy servants**, and upon thy people, and into thine ovens, and into thy kneadingtroughs: 4 And the frogs shall come up both on thee, and upon thy people, and upon all **thy servants**. θεράπων

Ex. 8:9 And Moses said unto Pharaoh, Glory over me: when shall I intreat for thee, and for **thy servants**, and for thy people, to destroy the frogs from thee and thy houses, that they may remain in the river only? θεράπων

Ex. 8:11 And the frogs shall depart from thee, and from thy houses, and from **thy servants**, and from thy people; they shall remain in the river only. θεράπων

Ex. 8:21 Else, if thou wilt not let my people go, behold, I will send swarms of flies upon thee, and upon **thy servants**, and upon thy people, and into thy houses: and the houses of the Egyptians shall be full of swarms of flies, and also the ground whereon they are. θεράπων

Ex. 8:24 And the LORD did so; and there came a grievous swarm of flies into the house of Pharaoh, and into **his servants'** houses, and into all the land of Egypt: the land was corrupted by reason of the swarm of flies. θεράπων

Ex. 8:29 And Moses said, Behold, I go out from thee, and I will intreat the LORD that the swarms of flies may depart from Pharaoh, from **his servants**, and from his people, to morrow: but let not Pharaoh deal deceitfully any more in not letting the people go to sacrifice to the LORD. θεράπων

## Introduction to Exodus

Ex. 8:31 And the LORD did according to the word of Moses; and he removed the swarms of flies from Pharaoh, from **his servants**, and from his people; there remained not one. θεράπων

Ex. 9:14 For I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and upon **thy servants**, and upon thy people; that thou mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth. θεράπων

Ex. 9:20 He that feared the word of the LORD among **the servants of Pharaoh** made his **servants** and his cattle flee into the houses: θεράπων, οικήτης

Ex. 9:21 And he that regarded not the word of the LORD left **his servants** and his cattle in the field. οικήτης

Ex. 9:30 But as for thee and **thy servants**, I know that ye will not yet fear the LORD God. θεράπων

Ex. 9:34 And when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders were ceased, he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart, he and **his servants**. θεράπων

Ex. 10:1 And the LORD said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh: for I have hardened his heart, and the heart of **his servants**, that I might shew these my signs before him: θεράπων

Ex. 10:6 And they shall fill thy houses, and the houses of all **thy servants**, and the houses of all the Egyptians; which neither thy fathers, nor thy fathers' fathers have seen, since the day that they were upon the earth unto this day. And he turned himself, and went out from Pharaoh. θεράπων

Ex. 10:7 And **Pharaoh's servants** said unto him, How long shall this man be a snare unto us? let the men go, that they may serve the LORD their God: knowest thou not yet that Egypt is destroyed? θεράπων

Ex. 11:3 And the LORD gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians. Moreover the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of **Pharaoh's servants**, and in the sight of the people. θεράπων

Ex. 11:8 And all these **thy servants** shall come down unto me, and bow down themselves unto me, saying, Get thee out, and all the people that follow thee: and after that I will go out. And he went out from Pharaoh in a great anger. παῖς

Ex. 12:30 And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all **his servants**, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead. θεράπων

Ex. 14:5 And it was told the king of Egypt that the people fled: and the heart of Pharaoh and of **his servants** was turned against the people, and they said, Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving [δουλεύω] us? θεράπων

## Servants of Israelites

*Regulations for how the nation is to treat them*

Ex. 12:44 But every man's servant that is bought for money, when thou hast circumcised him, then shall he eat thereof. οικήτης

Ex. 20:10 But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy **manservant**, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: παῖς

Ex. 20:17 Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his **manservant**, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's. *παῖς*

Ex. 21:2 If thou buy an Hebrew **servant**, six years he shall serve: and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing. *παῖς*

Ex. 21:5 And if the **servant** shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free: *παῖς*

Ex. 21:7 And if a man sell his daughter to be a maidservant, she shall not go out as the **menservants** do. *δοῦλος*

Ex. 21:20 And if a man smite his **servant**, or his maid, with a rod, and he die under his hand; he shall be surely punished. *παῖς*

Ex. 21:26 And if a man smite the eye of his **servant**, or the eye of his maid, that it perish; he shall let him go free for his eye's sake. *οικέτης*

Ex. 21:27 And if he smite out his **manservant's** tooth, or his maidservant's tooth; he shall let him go free for his tooth's sake. *οικέτης*

Ex. 21:32 If the ox shall push a **manservant** or a maidservant; he shall give unto their master thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned. *παῖς*

## עברי in the OT

Note the ethnicity of the speaker and the addressee. Twenty of the verses are either between Gentiles, or between Gentile and Hebrew, distinguishing the group ethnically.

### Narrator (7x)

*Note international context*

Gen. 14:13 And there came one that had escaped, and told Abram the **Hebrew**; for he dwelt in the plain of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol, and brother of Aner: and these were confederate with Abram. *First use of the term in the Bible. Clear connection with his ancestor Eber, 10:21ff, but not all the descendants of Eber are called עברי (TDOT X.437). TDOT notes LXX translation here "Abram the wanderer." Mamre, as an Amorite, was descended from Ham via Canaan, not from Shem: Gen 10:6, 15,16.*

Gen. 43:32 And they set on for him by himself, and for them by themselves, and for the Egyptians, which did eat with him, by themselves: because the Egyptians might not eat bread with the **Hebrews**; for that is an abomination unto the Egyptians.

Ex. 1:15 And the king of Egypt spake to the **Hebrew** midwives, of which the name of the one was Shiphrah, and the name of the other Puah: *Emphasis on the ethnic distinction*

Ex. 2:11 And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens: and he spied an Egyptian smiting an **Hebrew**, one of his brethren. *Again, emphasizing ethnic distinction*

Ex. 2:13 And when he went out the second day, behold, two men of the **Hebrews** strove together: and he said to him that did the wrong, Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow?

1Sam. 13:7 And some of the **Hebrews** went over Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. As for Saul, he was yet in Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling.

1Sam. 14:21 Moreover the **Hebrews** that were with the Philistines before that time, which went up with them into the camp from the country round about, even they also turned to be with the Israelites that were with Saul and Jonathan.

## Gentile to Gentile (10x)

Gen. 39:14 That she called unto the men of her house, and spake unto them, saying, See, he hath brought in an **Hebrew** unto us to mock us; he came in unto me to lie with me, and I cried with a loud voice:

Gen. 39:17 And she spake unto him according to these words, saying, The **Hebrew** servant, which thou hast brought unto us, came in unto me to mock me:

Gen. 41:12 And there was there with us a young man, an **Hebrew**, servant to the captain of the guard; and we told him, and he interpreted to us our dreams; to each man according to his dream he did interpret.

Ex. 1:16 And he said, When ye do the office of a midwife to the **Hebrew** women, and see them upon the stools; if it be a son, then ye shall kill him: but if it be a daughter, then she shall live.

Ex. 2:6 And when she had opened it, she saw the child: and, behold, the babe wept. And she had compassion on him, and said, This is one of the **Hebrews'** children.

1Sam. 4:6 And when the Philistines heard the noise of the shout, they said, What meaneth the noise of this great shout in the camp of the **Hebrews**? And they understood that the ark of the LORD was come into the camp.

1Sam. 4:9 Be strong, and quit yourselves like men, O ye Philistines, that ye be not servants unto the **Hebrews**, as they have been to you: quit yourselves like men, and fight.

1Sam. 13:19 Now there was no smith found throughout all the land of Israel: for the Philistines said, Lest the **Hebrews** make them swords or spears:

1Sam. 14:11 And both of them discovered themselves unto the garrison of the Philistines: and the Philistines said, Behold, the **Hebrews** come forth out of the holes where they had hid themselves.

1Sam. 29:3 Then said the princes of the Philistines, What do these **Hebrews** here? And Achish said unto the princes of the Philistines, Is not this David, the servant of Saul the king of Israel, which hath been with me these days, or these years, and I have found no fault in him since he fell unto me unto this day?

## Hebrew to Gentile (10x)

*6x in the plague sequence, identifying the group whose God is demanding their release*

Gen. 40:15 For indeed I was stolen away out of the land of the **Hebrews**: and here also have I done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon.

Ex. 1:19 And the midwives said unto Pharaoh, Because the **Hebrew** women are not as the Egyptian women; for they are lively, and are delivered ere the midwives come in unto them.

## Introduction to Exodus

Ex. 2:7 Then said his sister to Pharaoh's daughter, Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the **Hebrew** women, that she may nurse the child for thee?

Ex. 3:18 And they shall hearken to thy voice: and thou shalt come, thou and the elders of Israel, unto the king of Egypt, and ye shall say unto him, The LORD God of the **Hebrews** hath met with us: and now let us go, we beseech thee, three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.

Ex. 5:3 And they said, The God of the **Hebrews** hath met with us: let us go, we pray thee, three days' journey into the desert, and sacrifice unto the LORD our God; lest he fall upon us with pestilence, or with the sword.

Ex. 7:16 And thou shalt say unto him, The LORD God of the **Hebrews** hath sent me unto thee, saying, Let my people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness: and, behold, hitherto thou wouldest not hear.

Ex. 9:1 Then the LORD said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh, and tell him, Thus saith the LORD God of the **Hebrews**, Let my people go, that they may serve me.

Ex. 9:13 And the LORD said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of the **Hebrews**, Let my people go, that they may serve me.

Ex. 10:3 And Moses and Aaron came in unto Pharaoh, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of the **Hebrews**, How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before me? let my people go, that they may serve me.

Jonah 1:9 And he said unto them, I am an **Hebrew**; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land.

### Hebrew to Hebrew (5x)

*Other than 1 Sam 13:3, these all involve the laws of servants, which distinguish Hebrew from Gentile servants*

Ex. 21:2 If thou buy an **Hebrew** servant, six years he shall serve: and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing. *Distinguishing from gentile servant*

Deut. 15:12 And if thy brother, an **Hebrew** man, or an **Hebrew** woman, be sold unto thee, and serve thee six years; then in the seventh year thou shalt let him go free from thee.

1Sam. 13:3 And Jonathan smote the garrison of the Philistines that was in Geba, and the Philistines heard of it. And Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, Let the **Hebrews** hear. *Deserves more thought*

Jer. 34:9 That every man should let his manservant, and every man his maidservant, being an **Hebrew** or an **Hebrewess**, go free; that none should serve himself of them, to wit, of a Jew his brother.

Jer. 34:14 At the end of seven years let ye go every man his brother an **Hebrew**, which hath been sold unto thee; and when he hath served thee six years, thou shalt let him go free from thee: but your fathers hearkened not unto me, neither inclined their ear.

## The Relation of People and God

The twofold relation expressed in passages like 9:1, that the Lord belongs to a people and they belong to him, is rooted in Exodus (where “my people” first appears), but recurs throughout the Bible, often joined with a third concept, the sanctuary that allows fellowship between God and his people:

Lev 26:11 And I will set my **tabernacle** among you: and my soul shall not abhor you. 12 And I will walk among you, and will be **your God**, and ye shall be **my people**.

Ezk 37:27 My **tabernacle** also shall be with them: yea, I will be **their God**, and they shall be **my people**.

2Co 6:16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the **temple** of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be **their God**, and they shall be **my people**.

The third instance is noteworthy as extending the relation beyond ethnic Israel to the Gentiles.

Both relationships, “God of the Hebrews” and “my people,” are described in the language of ownership.

- God of the Hebrews, your God, their God: God belongs distinctively to Israel, and then to believers.
- My people: he claims those to whom he belongs, as his possession.

Historically, it is important that God established the first relation (with Abraham in Genesis 17) before he introduces the second (with Moses in Exodus 3). God first gives himself to us, before calling for our commitment to him. When he claims Israel as his own people for the first time in Exodus 3, it is in response to their cry to him in their oppression. The sequence anticipates key NT insights:

Jhn 1:11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not. 12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

Jhn 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

## Fear of God in the Pentateuch

Fear of God is intimately associated with his word (highlighted in red in the following list). This would relate the midwives’ fear to the promise to the fathers, particularly, the promise of the seed.

### Verb

Gen. 3:10 And he said, I heard **thy voice** in the garden, and **I was afraid**, because I was naked; and I hid myself.

Gen. 28:17 And **he was afraid**, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven. [after **God confirms the Abrahamic covenant** to him in vv. 13-15]

## Introduction to Exodus

Gen. 50:19 And Joseph said unto them, **Fear not: for am I in the place of God?**

Ex. 1:17 But the midwives **feared God**, and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men children alive.

Ex. 1:21 And it came to pass, because the midwives **feared God**, that he made them houses.

Ex. 3:6 Moreover he said, **I am the God of thy father**, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for **he was afraid to look upon God**.

Ex. 9:30 But as for thee and thy servants, I know that **ye will not yet fear the LORD God**. [That is, respond to **God's command**, "let my people go."]

Ex. 14:31 And Israel saw that great work which the LORD did upon the Egyptians: and **the people feared the LORD**, and believed the LORD, and his servant Moses.

Ex. 15:11 Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, **fearful in praises**, doing wonders?

*In Leviticus, the formula is typically associated with a specific commandment.*

Lev. 19:14 **Thou shalt not** curse the deaf, nor put a stumblingblock before the blind, but shalt **fear thy God**: I am the LORD.

Lev. 19:30 Ye shall **keep my sabbaths**, and **reverence my sanctuary**: I am the LORD.

Lev. 19:32 Thou shalt **rise up** before the hoary head, and **honour** the face of the old man, and **fear thy God**: I am the LORD.

Lev. 25:17 **Ye shall not therefore oppress** one another; but thou shalt **fear thy God**: for I am the LORD your God.

Lev. 25:36 **Take thou no usury** of him, or increase: but **fear thy God**; that thy brother may live with thee.

Lev. 25:43 **Thou shalt not rule over him with rigour**; but shalt **fear thy God**.

Lev. 26:2 Ye shall **keep my sabbaths**, and **reverence my sanctuary**: I am the LORD.

*Deuteronomy is very explicit about the relation between fear and obeying God's word*

Deut. 4:10 Specially the day that thou stoodest before the LORD thy God in Horeb, when the LORD said unto me, Gather me the people together, and **I will make them hear my words**, that they may learn **to fear me** all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children.

Deut. 5:29 O that there were such an heart in them, **that they would fear me**, and **keep all my commandments** always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!

Deut. 6:2 That thou mightest **fear the LORD thy God**, **to keep all his statutes and his commandments**, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged.

Deut. 6:13 Thou shalt **fear the LORD thy God**, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name. 14 **Ye shall not** go after other gods, of the gods of the people which are round about you;

Deut. 6:24 And the LORD commanded us to **do all these statutes**, to **fear the LORD our God**, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as it is at this day.

Deut. 8:6 Therefore thou shalt **keep the commandments** of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and **to fear him**.

Deut. 10:12 And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but **to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways**, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul,

Deut. 10:17 For the LORD your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a **terrible**, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward:

Deut. 10:20 Thou shalt **fear the LORD thy God; him shalt thou serve**, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name.

Deut. 13:4 Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and **fear him**, and **keep his commandments**, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him.

Deut. 14:23 And **thou shalt eat** before the LORD thy God, in the place which he shall choose to place his name there, the tithe of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds and of thy flocks; that thou mayest learn **to fear the LORD thy God** always.

Deut. 17:19 And it shall be with him, and **he shall read therein all the days of his life**: that he may learn **to fear the LORD his God, to keep** all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them:

Deut. 25:18 How he [Amalek] met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary; and **he feared not God**. [Not being of Israel, he **would not know the law of God**]

Deut. 28:58 If thou wilt not **observe to do all the words of this law** that are written in this book, that thou mayest **fear this glorious and fearful name, THE LORD THY GOD**;

Deut. 31:9 And Moses wrote this law, and delivered it unto the priests the sons of Levi, which bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and unto all the elders of Israel. 10 And Moses commanded them, saying, At the end of every seven years, in the solemnity of the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles, 11 When all Israel is come to appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose, **thou shalt read this law** before all Israel in their hearing. 12 Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, **that they may hear**, and that they may learn, and **fear the LORD your God**, and observe to do all the words of this law: 13 And that their children, which have not known any thing, **may hear, and learn to fear the LORD your God**, as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it.

## Adjective יָרָא with Genitive

Gen. 22:12 And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that **thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son**, thine only son from me.

Gen. 42:18 And Joseph said unto them the third day, This do, and live; for **I fear God**: [He knows the covenant with the fathers, and is bound by it]

Ex. 9:20 He that **feared the word of the LORD** among the servants of Pharaoh made his servants and his cattle flee into the houses:

Ex. 18:20 And thou shalt **teach them ordinances and laws**, and shalt shew them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do. 21 Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as **fear God**, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens:

### Noun יִרְאָה with Genitive

Gen. 20:11 And Abraham said, Because I thought, Surely **the fear of God** is not in this place; and they will slay me for my wife's sake. [because they are not under **covenant** with God]

Ex. 20:19 And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but **let not God speak with us**, lest we die. 20 And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that **his fear** may be before your faces, that ye sin not.