

Sacred Space in Promise: The Exodus

I. Background of the Exodus

1. All of salvation history, traced out in the Scriptures, is directed toward the creation's redemption and renewal, which design has its ultimate goal in God becoming "all in all," attaining full and perfect intimacy with His creation. * ref. 1 Cor. 15; Rom. 8; Rev. 21-22
2. God brought about a kind of "new creation" through Noah, but the curse of alienation and death remained. He later made a covenant with Abraham that He would be his God and the God of his descendants and dwell with them in an appointed place. However, this relationship in Canaan would be only a *provisional* recovery of sacred space, and even so it awaited a future time, as Abraham's covenant descendants were exiled out of the land.
3. This exile began as God's provision of life through Joseph, but later on it became a circumstance of slavery and cruel oppression. Nevertheless, God's promise to make Israel a great nation in Egypt was undeterred (Gen. 46:1-4). *The more the Egyptians sought to decimate the Hebrews, the more they increased in numbers and vitality, so much so that the Egyptians came to fear them as a threat and the Pharaoh sought to weaken them and eventually exterminate them by depriving them of male offspring.* * Exodus 1:1-22
4. The Egyptians sensed something remarkable at work among these Hebrews that enabled them to thrive against impossible odds, and it terrified them. *Ironically, the Egyptians sensed what the Hebrews apparently did not; they didn't see their God behind their astonishing circumstance. Indeed, as time passed the Israelites set their God aside and forgot about Him, even to the point of embracing the gods of Egypt.* * ref. Ezekiel 20:1-9

Israel's legacy of unfaithfulness and idolatry were firmly established in Egypt, and would only continue after the Lord brought them back to the covenant land. But God remained faithful to His covenant and His purposes in it, and so remembered and tended to His covenant people, even while they forsook Him.

5. Israel forsook and forgot their God, yet when they cried out in their suffering, He heard them and "remembered His covenant." (It's noteworthy that the text gives no clear indication that the Hebrews directed their pleas to Him – 2:23). The covenant sons had abandoned their God *psychologically* and *covenantally*, but He hadn't forsaken them, for He is **I am**, unchanging in His purpose, promises and faithfulness (6:1-8). He had already chosen, preserved and prepared a deliverer – Moses, "*he who draws out*" – and now He was sending His man to bring them out through His own triumph over Egypt and its gods, climaxing with the death of Egypt's firstborn sons and new birth for His firstborn through the Passover. * Exodus 4:21ff

II. Significance of the Exodus

The Egyptian Exodus holds a unique place within Israel's history; *it was fundamental to Israel's sense of itself, its relation to God, and its role in His purposes.* Hence the Exodus episode is a primary theme in Israel's scriptures as they unfold God's purposes and their outworking.

The One who arose on behalf of His covenant to redeem and liberate the heirs from their bondage and restore them to Himself would do so again, this time with a greater redemptive work that would be final, fully effectual, and creation-wide in its scope.

1. In terms of its ***historical*** significance, *the Exodus set the stage for God's fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant as it regarded his descendants.* If they were to inherit the covenant and its promises, they would first have to be delivered from Egypt.
2. The Exodus was the foundation for establishing the kingdom promised to Abraham (Gen. 15:12ff), and hence signified Israel's *birth* as covenant son. * Exodus 2:24-3:17, 12:1-14
3. This is the reason the scriptural narrative presents *Sinai* as the focal point of the Exodus (cf. 3:1-12, 19:1-6), and so also of Israel's national existence as Abraham's covenant seed. At *Sinai, Israel was formally constituted a covenant nation and joined to Yahweh as His "son."*
4. But because Israel's election and calling pertained to the entire cursed creation, the historical events of Israel's existence had profound ***salvation-historical*** significance – *significance centered in the Messiah, who is the climax of history and Israel's own destiny.*
 - a. Thus Israel's exodus out of Egypt, with its premise in the Abrahamic Covenant and its focal point in the Passover, became the singular prefiguration and promise of a future counterpart – a *second exodus* in which God, through His messianic servant-king, would deliver the creation from its bondage and establish His presence and rule in the earth (i.e., *sacred space*) as He had purposed from the beginning. * Isa. 49-55, also 2:1-4, 11:1-12
 - b. This conception of sacred space – *God with us* – is precisely what Canaan represented as the goal of Israel's deliverance from Egypt and constitution as a nation. The Abrahamic Covenant carried forward God's oath in Eden, and so held out the promise of a sanctuary land where God and men would dwell together in covenant fellowship. The Exodus served the fulfillment of that promise, albeit at the preparatory, typological level.
5. This truth is celebrated in the *Song of Moses* that the Israelites sang after Yahweh destroyed the Egyptian army in the Red Sea. It celebrated God's faithfulness in delivering them, and so anticipated their entrance into His sanctuary land. Thus its two sections: vv. 1-12 and 13-18.

He'd delivered Israel, not as El Shaddai (God Almighty) but as Yahweh, the covenant God and Father of His elect son in order to gather His son to Himself. * 3:13-14, 4:21-23, 6:2-8

The Song of Moses reveals that God's goal in redeeming His son was covenant fellowship, grounded in covenant love (hesed) and maintained by covenant integrity and faithfulness.

*"The point has been made that the word **hesed** is not applicable to the establishment of a relationship, but reflects rather fidelity and loyalty to an existing relationship. The aim of the **hesed** exhibited is to preserve the tenor of the relationship which already exists."* (Dumbrell)

Conclusions

1. The Exodus represented another symbolic “new creation” – the birth of a new image-son appointed to rule God’s dwelling place in His name and for His sake as a faithful priest-king.
2. It had its basis, meaning, and goal in God’s intent for His creation as sacred space. Thus the Exodus looked toward Canaan, which represented God’s new garden-sanctuary (note the Edenic imagery of Canaan). But Canaan would fall short, even as Israel would fail as image-son. *The Exodus fulfilled its purpose by enlarging and advancing the promise of another day.*