

FROM BONDAGE TO REDEMPTION:  
THE LITERARY AND THEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF EXODUS 1-15

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## Introduction

The historical narrative of the Old Testament redemption should be of great interest for the New Testament Christian. Although it does not stand at the beginning of salvation history, it certainly stands at its forefront. Indeed, the importance of the Old Testament redemption is only overshadowed by its New Testament counterpart - the redemption from sin and death that was accomplished by Christ at the cross. Because of its importance, the historical narrative of Exodus 1-15 has much to offer the student, both theologically and ethically. Biblical history is a selective and interpretive history. Thus, it is theological by its very nature. This theological aspect in turn becomes the basis for Old Testament ethics. The whole of the Old Testament religion is a response to the acts of God that are revealed in historical narrative. It should therefore come as no surprise that the events of Exodus 1-15 overflow into the rest of the canon, as the covenant community remembers those events in the context of its religious life. Israel's faith was rooted in its history and the redemptive events of Exodus 1-15 were either at or near the center of that history.

In our approach to this historical narrative we will first examine, in survey fashion, the literary form of Exodus 1-15. Then we will study the theological function of Exodus 1-15 both in its antecedent Old Testament context and its subsequent Old and New Testament contexts. Finally, in a concluding summary, we will make some observations regarding the significance of our findings.

### I. The Literary Form of Exodus 1-15

Almost any reader of Old Testament narrative has noticed its repetitious language at some points. Often, a closer examination of the text will reveal formal literary structure. One such structure is known as chiasm. Chiasm may be defined as "the mirrored repetition of certain features of a narrative discourse."<sup>1</sup> This inverted parallelism therefore will order itself so that the features in the first half of the text will be repeated in reverse order in the second half of the text (A B C C' B' A'). The key to identifying chiastic structure is found in verbal and thematic repetition<sup>2</sup>. These factors constitute an objective basis by which one may substantiate chiastic structure.

Of course, a subjective element is retained and may manifest itself in how one identifies and labels a given episode in the repetition. If one raises the semantic level of the text far enough he can often find an abstract repetition that is really not there. Unless one is careful, what emerges is a new and subtle form of allegory.<sup>3</sup> In the following presentation, Exodus 1-15 will be examined as to its literary form according to the methodology of identification which was previously mentioned. Some interpretative significance will be brought out, but any theological aspects will be set forth in a later section of this paper.

A general outline of the proposed structure follows, so that it will facilitate discussion of the corresponding pairs in their respective sequence: A/A', B/B', C/C'.

Covenant Prologue: God's Faithfulness in Bondage	1:1-22
A. Moses' Birth – Deliverance	2:1-10
B. Moses' Sojourn – Firstborn	2:11-22
(Covenant Transition)	2:23-25
C. Moses' Call – Preparation	3:1-6:1
1. Covenant Introduction	3:1-17
2. Signs	3:18-4:18
3. Blood	x 4:19-31
4. Negative Conclusion	5:1-6:1
C' Israel's Call – Preparation	6:2-12:36
1' Covenant Introduction	6:2-9
2' Signs	6:10-10:29
3' Blood	11:1-12:28
4' Positive Conclusion	12:29-36
(Covenant Transition)	12:37-42
B' Israel's Sojourner – Firstborn	12:43-13:16
A' Israel's Birth – Deliverance	x 13:17-14:31
Covenant Epilogue: God's Faithfulness in Redemption	15:1-21

## Discussion

Covenant Prologue/Epilogue. This pair constitutes the introduction and the conclusion to the formal structure that it envelops. As such it is perhaps an unconvincing way to begin a discussion of chiasm along the lines of verbal and thematic repetition. This is because the only common point between 1:1-22 and 15:1-21 is the opposite nature of the thematic content. In the beginning the reader is informed as to Israel's bondage, and in the end he is informed as to the celebration of Israel's Redemption.<sup>4</sup> It must be remembered, however, that dramatic narratives ordinarily have a "bell curve" contour<sup>5</sup>: the stage must be set in the beginning, the tension of the plot must build up and then release, and a fitting ending must ensue.<sup>6</sup> Although there is certainly no celebration in 1:1-22, it must be noted that God was faithful to his promises to the forefathers even in persecution, because "the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread" (Ex.1:12).

## A/A' Birth – Deliverance

Ex. 2:1-10 and 13:17-14:31 are related generally by their thematic content. In 2:1-10 we find the birth and providential deliverance of Moses from the mortal threat of the Egyptians and the waters of the Nile River. In 13:17-14:31 the main event centers in the miraculous deliverance of Israel from the mortal threat of the Egyptians and the waters of the Red Sea. The correspondence is simple but effective.

### B/B' Sojourn - Firstborn

In 2:11-22 we are told about an incident that occurred after Moses had grown up which leads to his flight to Midian. There he meets a woman and marries her, also agreeing to stay with her father. Zipporah, his wife, gives birth to a son and Moses names him Gershom, saying, "I have become an alien in a foreign land" (2:22). Exodus 12:43-13:16 has constituted an interpretive problem for those who take the final form of the text seriously. Higher critical scholars are generally agreed regarding some of the source divisions of these chapters. For them, the only problem is identifying which sources are J E D or P.<sup>7</sup> The problem for conservatives has been to do justice to what appears to be "a loose collection of appendices attached to an initial Passover pericope."<sup>8</sup> A simple answer to the problem may be found via the literary structure of Exodus 1-15. The general divisions of 12:43-13:16 are twofold: the first gives regulations for the Passover as it regards the foreigner/alien (12:43-51), and the second gives an ordinance regarding the consecration of the firstborn (13:1-16). Each of the general divisions is a chiasm in itself with the central thoughts being the Passover meal and feast of un-leavened bread respectively. These, of course, relate the material to what precedes. However, the reason that these "appendices" are positioned where they are in the text is not because of later "emendation or afterthought. They are positioned exactly so as to correspond to the sojourn and firstborn of Moses in 2:11-22. Here we have not only thematic repetition, but also the verbal correspondence of "foreigner" and "alien."

### (Covenant Transition)

At this point it seems appropriate to point out that the chiasm of 1-15 neatly divides into two halves (Moses/Israel). Smaller units that serve a transitory purpose further divide these halves. The nature of these transitions has been labeled "covenant" because they both make mention of some aspect of God's previous covenant with the forefathers. In 2:23-25 the covenant aspect is explicitly stated, but in 12:37-42, the chronological note implies it (in 40-41). The 430 years is an exact figure meant to identify this event with the oracle of Gen. 15:13-16, when Yahweh made a covenant with Abram. The population figure of 12:38 probably indicates a fulfillment of God's promise of fruitfulness to Abraham in Gen. 17. Taken together, these transitions enclose the inner core of the chiasm that, as we shall see, is composed of a number of sub-terms that are parallel but not inverted.

### C/C' Call – Preparation

Exodus 3:1-6:1 forms the inner core of the chiasm along with its corresponding term 6:2-12:36. As previously stated, this section is composed of sub-terms that are parallel but not inverted. The label here may be debatable. Call" seems reasonable because Moses' encounter with God is definitely a call narrative.<sup>9</sup> "Preparation," however is simply a "catch-all" term. This seems to especially suit the content of sub-terms 2/2' and 3/3'. This may or may not capture the idea of the context, but even if this is so, the verbal and thematic repetition still exists no matter how one might choose to label it.

### 1/1' Covenant Introduction

Again we observe the intrusion of the covenant theme in a parallel structure. Both 3:1-17 and 6:2-9 take this theme and combine it into an initial assurance to Moses (3:1-14/6:2-5) and a subsequent message for Israel (3:15-17/6:6-9). The first assurance to Moses is larger than its counterpart because it also serves as a call to God's service. Notice that these sections display a great deal of verbal and thematic repetition, including that of the divine name.

### 2/2' Signs

This section is a bit more complicated. Exodus 3:18-4:18 and 6:10-10:29 are corresponding sub-terms that are themselves composed in the following manner:

3:18-4:13 Outcome predicted-Signs  
4:14-18 Prophet-Family

6:10-7:2 Family-Prophet  
7:3-10:29 Outcome predicted-Signs

The major element of the section as a whole might be regarded as the "signs." They certainly take center stage in the latter half (7:8-10:29). They also assume a lead role in the first half (4:1-13). An interesting structural element has long been noticed about the plagues in Egypt:

"The first nine are a continuous series, set apart from the tenth, the death of the first-born. The nine are structured by a literary device that groups them into three sets of three plagues each. In the first plague in each set, Moses is commanded to appear before Pharaoh at the river; in the second he is to 'come before Pharaoh' at his palace; and in the third he is to make a gesture which brings the plague without warning to Pharaoh."<sup>10</sup> This fits quite well since the three sets would then correspond as the same amount given to Moses. Both sections have a number of other verbal and thematic parallels, including that of the "prophet" theme. The "Outcome predicted" promises are fulfilled with great accuracy in Ex. 1-15.

### 3/3' Blood

Actually 4:19-31 and 11:1-12:28 might also be called "signs." Exodus 11:1 informs the reader of one more "plague," 12:13 calls the blood a "sign," and 4:19-26 speaks of "wonders" and also predicts the very events of 11:1-12:28. However, the title "Blood" was selected because the emphasis changes in this section. It takes center stage here because of the death of the firstborn and the protective power of blood for Israel. These main elements may first be observed in "B" and "C" of the following chiasm that encompasses "3."

- A. Promise: Israel to be ousted - Egypt plundered 11:1-3
- B. Promise: Firstborn of Egypt to be killed 11:4-10
- C. Protective Blood for Israel 12:1-13
- D. Feast of Unleavened Bread 12:14-16
- D' Feast of Unleavened Bread 12:17-20
- C' Protective Blood for Israel 12:21-28
- B' Fulfillment: Firstborn of Egypt Killed 12:29-30.
- A' Fulfillment: Israel ousted - Egypt plundered 12:31-36<sup>11</sup>

It must first be noted that the correspondence of the structure above with its counterpart in chapter 4 occurs in the first half of the chiasm in the order found in 4:19-31 (Firstborn of Pharaoh to be killed and Protective blood for Moses). Notice that the corresponding features of the later passage are an enlargement of those represented in the earlier passage.<sup>12</sup> Pharaoh is the leader of Egypt, while Moses is the leader of Israel. Another parallel element may be observed in verse 28. "Worship" is present at 4:31 and 12:28 signaling the end of the section.

As previously noted, the main chiasm of Ex. 1-15 is divided into halves. These halves contain at least one repetition that indicates that they are an independent structure. At the end of the penultimate section of each respective half, there is a note about the faith of the Israelites. In each case, the Israelites see the signs and "Believe" (4:31 and 14:31). Cf. "x" marks on the general outline. In chapter four there are therefore two "end" signals in one area. One signal is "worship" which marks the end of 3/3.' The other signal is "believed" which marks the approaching end of each respective half of the chiasm. One last observation must be made regarding the interpretive value of the structure in 3/3.' Although unaware of chiasm in Ex. 1-15, M. Fishbane has gone on record to note the parallelism between the Passover account and the somewhat enigmatic account in 4:24-26 where God attacks Moses.<sup>13</sup>

The main elements of 3/3' (death of firstborn, protective power of blood) must be viewed together. The death of the Egyptian firstborn is matched by the "substitutionary" death of the Passover lamb. This same principle, which is seen in the Passover account with regard to the Egyptians and Israelites, is also seen in 4:21-26 with regard to Pharaoh and Moses. Thus far it has gone without saying that Moses is portrayed in this entire structure as typical of national destiny. It would seem that, by touching Moses' genitals ("feet") with the bloody foreskin, Moses was protected in a substitutionary manner from certain death. What would later work for the Israelites is foreshadowed in Moses. Of course, this does not completely solve all the problems of this passage, but it does seem to set the direction for a more complete solution.

#### 4/4' Negative - Positive Conclusion

Exodus 5:1-6:1 brings both Moses and the Israelites to the end of their rope. The negative results of his first encounter with Pharaoh came as a complete surprise for Moses, even though God had predicted an initial failure (4:18-22). Exodus 12:29-36 corresponds to 5:1-6:1 in that they are opposite in nature. There is no verbal or thematic repetition, but their position within the rest of the structure seems to force a correspondence between the two. As the low point in the drama, 5:1-6:1 also corresponds to the high point of 15:1-21. Both of these are signaled verbally by the mention of "believe" in the last part of the sections that respectively precede them.

## II. The Theological Function of Exodus 1-15

### A. The Old Testament Context

#### 1. The Antecedent Old Testament Context

There is really nothing of commensurate significance that precedes Exodus 1-15. Not since creation was such power manifest in such a supernatural context. The author had little to pattern his narrative after. At the beginning of the Patriarchal narratives, Abraham's exodus from Ur is portrayed as a paradigm of the Israelite redemption. Abraham goes to Egypt, and sojourns there. After problems develop, God sends plagues against Pharaoh and his household. Then Pharaoh sends Abraham away with great wealth. The end of the Patriarchal narratives provides Joseph as a model of Moses. He was the savior of Jacob even though they at first had rejected him and sent him away to a foreign land. Exodus is organically related to its predecessor, Genesis. The introduction to the book makes this clear. Before resuming the plot of Israel's history, the author recapitulates some of the information given in Genesis. It begins with a genealogy of Jacob's sons from Gen. 46:8ff. The phrases "these are the names" (46:8) and "seventy in all" (46:27) provide a further link between the patriarchs and the present context.<sup>14</sup> This genealogy is framed by the last verse in Genesis (50:26) and the first verse of narrative in Exodus (1:6), which both refer to the death of Joseph. Exodus 1:7 underscores the importance of the fact that the ancestors who went into Egypt left a posterity after them. In fact, the "sons of Israel" (1:1) who went into Egypt were now "the people of the sons of Israel" (1:9)<sup>15</sup>.

Thus far, we have observed several elements of continuity between Genesis and Exodus. However, there is no doubt that the most important antecedent context is the covenant concept. The promises that God had made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob become the very warp and woof of Exodus 1-15. References to the covenant are systematically woven into the structure of this passage as can be shown from a summary of the general outline:

1. Covenant Prologue 1:1-22
2. Covenant Transition 2:23-25
3. Covenant Introduction 3:1-17
4. Covenant Introduction 6:2-9
5. Covenant Transition 12:37-42
6. Covenant Epilogue 15:1-21

A brief survey of the covenant content of these sections will enhance one's appreciation of what God was doing in redeeming His people. In chapter one, the Israelites are in bondage, however, God remains true to his oath that he had sworn to the fathers. At every stage in the Egyptian persecution of the Israelites, the reader is informed that the people, who were already "numerous" (1:7), "multiplied and spread" (1:12) and "increased and became even more numerous" (1:20).

This blessing of fruitfulness can be traced back at least to God's promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as the following references show:

Gen.17:2 (to Abraham) "I will confirm my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers."

Gen.17:6 (to Abraham) "I will make you very fruitful..."

Gen.22:17 (to Abraham) "I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore..."

Gen.26:4 (to Isaac) "I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky..."

Gen. 28:14 (to Jacob) "Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth..."

Gen. 35:11 (to Jacob) "I am God Almighty: be fruitful and increase in number."

In chapter two, "God heard their groaning and He remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob" (2:24). This is probably referring to the following covenant situations:

Gen.15:18 (with Abraham) "On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram and said, 'To your descendants I will give this land..'"

Gen.17:7 (with Abraham) "I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him."

Gen. 26:24 (with Isaac) "Do not be afraid for I am with you; I will bless you and will increase the number of your descendants..."

Gen. 35:11-12 (with Jacob) "...A nation and a community of nations will come from your body. The land I give to Abraham and Isaac I also give to you, and I will give this land to your descendants after you."

In Chapter three, in the account about the burning bush, God again refers to this covenant that was made with the forefathers as a means of identifying who he was (3:6). His explanation that follows, unfolds his intention to rescue his people and bring them to the Promised Land (3:8). Even the name of God was indicative of his covenant relationship with them (3:14). Its usage in the Old Testament seems to point to, "God's relationship to Israel both in his saving acts and his retributive acts, manifesting his phenomenological effectiveness in Israel's history."<sup>16</sup> It was the message of this covenantal salvation that Moses was to give Israel as they suffered in Egypt (15-17).

Chapter six is similar in many ways to chapter three. The usage of the divine name surfaces again in the context of God's confirmation of his promise of redemption (6:2-8). Here the distinction between God's appearance as "Yahweh" is brought out. The patriarchs certainly knew the name "Yahweh," but they did not understand its redemptive implications. God had not shown himself to them "in the character of" Yahweh.<sup>17</sup> The Israelites were soon to comprehend the meaning of the name via the salvation that God would bring. The message that Moses brings to the Israelites (6:6-8) reaffirms God's promises and also anticipates his further covenantal relationship with them with a reference to the covenant at Mount Sinai, "I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God" (6:7)<sup>18</sup>.

Chapter 12 contains another covenant transition. Initially, the passage (12:37-42) informs the reader that about 600,000 Israelite men, besides women and children, left Egypt. Although some contest this figure, it must at least be meant to show the remarkable fruitfulness of the Israelites as a result of God's faithfulness.

Another numerical reference to the covenant is also given in this passage (12:40-41). The text states that the length of time the Israelite people lived in Egypt was 430 years "to the very day". This reference establishes a striking link between the exodus and the oracle given in Gen. 15:13-14. This oracle, which itself is in a covenant context, predicts four aspects of Israel's history.<sup>19</sup>

- |                                               |     |
|-----------------------------------------------|-----|
| A. Strangers in a country not their own       | 13a |
| B. Enslaved and mistreated four hundred years | 13b |
| B' Punishment for nation they serve as slaves | 14a |
| A' Come out with great possessions            | 14b |

At this point in the Exodus narrative, all four of these aspects have reached fulfillment. The last aspect (great possessions) has just been mentioned in 12:36, which is the last verse of the previous section.

Chapter fifteen contains Moses' "Song of the Sea."

It is a hymn that celebrates God's spectacular victory over Pharaoh and his army. Several elements within the hymn point to God's covenant faithfulness in redemption. First, God's divine name is used ten times throughout the hymn.<sup>20</sup> Second, the hymn itself is composed in such a way that the past is rehearsed (15:1-12), and then the future is joyfully anticipated based on the past (15:13-18).

The first part of both sections speaks of God's relationship to Israel together with the redemption that he accomplished.

15:2 "he has become my salvation. He is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him."

15:13 "In your unfailing love you will lead the people you have redeemed."

## 2. The Subsequent Old Testament Context

Because the exodus motif is used so extensively throughout the rest of the Old Testament, this study will restrict itself to the two periods in the history of Israel in which it manifests itself the most. These periods are:

- a. The Rise of the Tribal League (1445-1375 B.C.) This was the period in which Israel was under the leadership of Moses and Joshua.
- b. The Fall of the Divided Monarchy (745-539 B.C.) This was the period of Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian domination.

Within each of these crucial periods of Israel's history we will study a representative sample of the motif as its theological function changes to meet contingent situations. Because several of these passages are lengthy, observations will be made under the assumption that the reader will supply his/her own text.

### a. The Rise of the Tribal League

Deuteronomy 6:20-25 (Didactic). In this passage the exodus motif is used in the context of teaching the purpose and significance of the covenantal law to the next generation. The son views himself apart from the obligations ("You" vs. 20) but the father includes him ("we" vs. 25). The motif is used in this context to outline the gracious acts of God for Israel, which, reciprocally, obligate them to Him. Since the son is a beneficiary of the promises, he also has an obligation to obey the law<sup>21</sup>. A similar usage from a later period may be found in Ps. 78.

Deuteronomy 7:7-11 (Paraenetic). The motif stands within the context of the commandments that decisively separate Israel from the Canaanites and their worship.<sup>22</sup> Israel was not redeemed because of any merit within themselves (vs. 7). It was only because of God's election and covenant faithfulness to the forefathers that he redeemed them (vs. 8). The fact that God keeps his covenant means that he will be faithful to those who love him and will not be slow to repay those who hate him. Therefore they should obey the command (vs. 9-11).

Deuteronomy 26:5-11 (Liturgical). One of the ceremonial stipulations of the law was the offering of the first fruits. In contrast with the specific stipulations of Deut. 12-26, which anticipated the continuing life of Israel in the Promised Land, the legislation here relates to a particular ceremony that was only to occur one time. Once they had taken possession of the land they would mark the inauguration of the new agricultural life through this offering.<sup>23</sup> The confession expresses the worshipper's gratitude as a fitting response to God's mighty acts on His people's behalf. Another usage of similar character may be found in Ps. 105.

Joshua 3:7-17 (Typological). Before the battle at Jericho, the Israelites crossed over the Jordan in a miraculous manner just as their fathers had crossed the Red Sea some forty years in the past. The historical analogy seems to be intentional because the text interprets the purpose and significance of the event in a two-fold manner. First, it was a validation of Joshua's leadership ("so they may know that I am with you as I was with Moses" 3:7). Second, it was an assurance that God would be with Israel during the conquest (3:10ff). These same themes were also present at the Red Sea event (14:31, 15:13). Psalm 114:3 fuses both the Red Sea event and the Crossing of the Jordan into one poetic expression: "The sea looked and fled, the Jordan turned back."

There seems to be, therefore, a typological link between Moses and his generation, with that of Joshua and his generation.<sup>24</sup>

Joshua 24:5-7 (Covenantal). Here the exodus motif surfaces in the “historical prologue” section that was part of ancient Near Eastern treaty structure. The prologue was usually a brief account of the past history of the relationship in which the benevolent acts of the suzerain towards the vassal were rehearsed. The implication of this recital for the vassal was that he was morally obligated to repay the graciousness of the suzerain by obedience to the covenant stipulations. Thus, in the context of the covenant renewal at Shechem, the Israelites are told to serve Yahweh (14-16) on the basis of his redemptive acts on their behalf. This motif is used the same way in Exodus 20:2 and Deuteronomy 4:34-38.

#### b. The Fall of the Divided Monarchy

Isaiah 19:16-25 (Eschatological – Salvation of Egypt). This is a reversal of the exodus motif. The language is very similar to Exodus 3:7-9 and 8:16-24, except that here it is Egypt who will be rescued by a savior. Here the prophet looks well beyond the present realities to see a day when Egypt will worship the Lord.<sup>25</sup> This is apparently the only usage of the motif in this manner.

Isaiah 43:14-21 (Eschatological -Salvation of Israel). The “new exodus” theme is developed during this period of history. It may be observed in the writings of other prophets (Jer. 16:14-15; Hosea 2:14-15; Micah 7:14-15), but is especially prevalent in Isaiah (11:11-16, 41:14, 48:20, 52:11-12)<sup>26</sup>. In this context, the event at the Red Sea is referred to as one of the “former things” (vs. 18), which corresponds to the “new thing” (vs. 19) that the Lord would do. Here, the reference to “Babylon” (vs. 14) and the exodus language make it clear that God would deliver his people from Babylonian servitude.

Micah 6:1-8 (Polemic). This text depicts a courtroom scene in which the Lord lodges a legal complaint against Israel.<sup>27</sup> The case against Israel is only strengthened when their disobedience is contrasted with a rehearsal of the Lord's goodness to them. It was their own history that testified against them. Other usages that are similar to this may be found in Ezekiel 20:5-8, Hosea 11:1-2 and Amos 2:10.

Ezekiel 20:33-42 (Eschatological – Judgment of Israel). This passage stands in the tradition of the “new exodus” theme, but with an ironic twist. Instead of being purely an act of salvation, it will be for the purpose of judgment upon the people of Israel. The correspondence of this text with that of the exodus is reflected in the language used. The terminology is especially similar to that which is contained in Exodus 6:6-8.<sup>28</sup> As with the first exodus, many of those who would come out of captivity would never enter into the promised land because of God's judgment.

Daniel 9:15-17 (Penitential). This occurrence of the exodus motif takes place within the context of Daniel's great prayer for Israel. He confesses their sins and then he appeals to God's graciousness in the past as a motivation for him to renew his acts of mercy on his people's behalf. Other uses of this theme may be found in Ps. 106 and Is. 63.

## B. The New Testament Context

Matthew. In the first few chapters of his gospel, Matthew composes the account of Jesus' birth and early years with Exodus 1-15 in mind. He does so in a midrashic fashion, conflating the themes and characters, so that a distinct and ordered parallel is not readily discernable. There are allusions to the themes found in the early chapters of Exodus and the two main characters, Moses and Israel. Both accounts: begin with a genealogy, report protection in infancy, relate a deliverance in early life which includes the death of innocents, record a sojourn either in or out of Egypt, and make reference to sonship.<sup>29</sup>

Matthew 2:15 is a quotation of Hosea 11:1. The Hosea passage is itself an allusion to Ex. 4:22-23. Although many commentators correctly note the correspondence between Christ and Israel, it seems that the function of the quotation in context is often ignored.<sup>30</sup>

Childs endorses the apologetic element that is present. The allusion to the Old Testament would be an attempt to establish a messianic claim via proof texting.<sup>31</sup> He sees the emphasis as being on the exodus where Christ, as the true redeemer, ushers in the messianic age.<sup>32</sup> Because of its position in the text, Gundry rejects the "new exodus" emphasis and sees in this text "...God's preservation of Jesus in Egypt as a sign of his divine sonship: God cares for Jesus as a father cares for his son."<sup>33</sup> Other notable points in Matthew are the similarity of language between 2:20 and Ex. 4:19 and also a possible reference to the obedient Christ being the firstborn of the new people of God (3:17).<sup>34</sup>

Mark. Mark 14:12-26 is one of the four New Testament accounts of the Lord's Supper. The historical roots of that occasion go back to Exodus 1-15 as Jeremias further elucidates: "There can be only one explanation for Jesus' quite unusual procedure in clothing the announcement and interpretation of his imminent suffering in the form of words of interpretation of the bread and wine: words of interpretation were a fixed ingredient of the rite of the Passover meal (as they are even today). The custom had grown out of Ex. 12:26 ff., 13:8, where the head of the house is enjoined to explain the meaning of the rites of Passover and the feast of Unleavened Bread to his children. To fulfill this prescription, at each Passover meal the father had to explain to the family in a paschal liturgy the peculiarities of the meal, and particularly why unleavened bread, bitter herbs and a roast lamb were eaten on this night. If, as the synoptic gospels record, Jesus' last meal was a Passover meal, as head of his group of disciples he was obliged to observe the paschal liturgy and in so doing gave the interpretations of bread and wine which he then repeated in the grace which follows the liturgy. Speaking in words of interpretation may seem strange to us, but it was nothing extraordinary for the disciples, but a familiar part of the Passover ritual."<sup>35</sup>

Luke. In Luke 9:30-31, Moses and Elijah spoke with Jesus regarding the "exodus" he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem. Although this is at least a reference to Christ's death, thoughts of the resurrection and of the saving significance of the event should not be excluded.<sup>36</sup> By way of caution however, Childs denies any relation to the exodus tradition in this passage. He says that the connection is only possible by means of an "illegitimate semantic transfer."<sup>37</sup>

John. John's use of Exodus 1-15 concentrates on Christ as the Passover lamb. This may be observed in the general reference to Christ as the sacrifice that takes away the sin of the world (Jn. 1:29). Near the end of his gospel, John links Christ's death with the death of Passover lambs. The fact that "not one of his bones" was broken (Jn. 19:33, 36) was interpreted by John as a specific fulfillment of the guidelines of Ex. 12:46.<sup>38</sup>

Acts. Two sermons in Acts are noteworthy. In Acts 7, Stephen rehearses the history of Israel, including the exodus, with an emphasis on the people's disobedience. The fathers had rejected their deliverer, Moses. The audience is then accused of acting just as their fathers had acted in rejecting Christ. In Acts 13, Paul also rehearses the history of Israel, making mention of the Exodus.

In this sermon, he emphasizes God's faithfulness to his covenant and how Christ is the fulfillment of what was promised to their fathers. The exodus was just one example of God's covenant loyalty.

Romans. In Romans Jesus Christ leads the entire world out of bondage and into the Promised Land (e.g., "redemption" 3:24, "baptism" and the new life ch 6-8). In the context of discussing God's sovereign election, Paul makes reference to the Pharaoh of the exodus (9:16-18). The lesson is clear. God is free to have mercy on whomever he chooses. If he chooses Israel, then he is also free to make Pharaoh subservient to his will in accordance with this choice. God's purpose prevails. His glorious character is displayed because of Pharaoh in the events of the exodus.

I Corinthians. In I Cor. 5:6-8, Paul draws the analogy of the feast of Unleavened Bread with reference to the moral laxity which existed within the Corinthian church and that was contrary to the holy character of the people of God. In a positional sense, they were a fresh batch of dough without yeast. This is because Christ, the Passover lamb, had already been sacrificed. They should therefore act in accordance with this fact and rid themselves of the sin that had infiltrated the church. In still another paraenetic context (I Cor. 10:1-6), Paul implicitly compares the redemptive experience of ancient Israel with that of the New Testament church. Both Israel and the church were incorporated into their respective saviors through baptism. Yet it was still possible for God not to be pleased with most of Israel so that, as a result, they were not only saved, but also judged. The warning for the church is that they should take heed to this example and not let it also happen to them. Bruce calls this example "...one of the basic texts for the use of the Old Testament in the New."<sup>39</sup>

Because of its connection with the Passover meal, the Lord's supper account of I Cor. 11:23-26 may qualify as a related subsequent context in the New Testament. Ridderbos therefore terms it as a "redemptive-historical commemorative meal." He says further that "Christ's self-surrender is now, as hitherto the exodus of Israel out of Egypt, the new and definitive fact of redemption which in the eating of the bread and in the drinking of the wine the church may accept as such again and again from the hand of God."<sup>40</sup> Although the supper, as a sacrificial meal, contains elements that relate it to the New Covenant, its Paschal framework provides a context in which the benefits thereof may be shared by the participants.<sup>41</sup>

I Peter. There is some question as to whether I Peter 1:18-19 is referring to the Paschal lamb or the prophetic lamb of Isaiah 53.<sup>42</sup> The context points to the “precious blood” of that sacrifice as the price of our redemption. This knowledge forms the basis for the reverential fear of God in daily life. Redemption in this context has a high price. Exodus 1-15 emphasizes the deliverance element, but blood is certainly portrayed as intrinsic to the Old Testament redemption.

Jude. Some early manuscripts of Jude 5 read, “Jesus delivered his people out of Egypt, but later destroyed those who did not believe.”

UB3 (3rd Ed.) lists nine different readings at this point, and evaluates the certainty of the selected reading (“Lord”) as a “D” rating (very high degree of doubt). Metzger and Wikgren hold the minority opinion saying that “critical principles seem to require the adoption of ‘Jesus,’ which admittedly is the best attested reading among Greek and versional witnesses.”<sup>43</sup> The majority of the committee felt that the reading was difficult to the point of impossibility.

Revelation. Goppelt has listed the following references to devastations in the book of Revelation which are portrayed in colors derived from the plagues in Egypt:<sup>44</sup>

Rev. 8:7 - Ex. 9:24	Rev. 16:2 – Ex. 9:10ff
Rev. 8:8ff - Ex. 7:20	Rev. 16:3 – Ex. 7:17,21
Rev. 8:10ff - Ex. 7:20ff	Rev. 16:10 – Ex. 10:21
Rev. 8:12 - Ex. 10:21	Rev. 16:21 – Ex. 9:23

The “song of Moses” in Rev. 15:3 may refer to Exodus 15, but a case may also be made for its correspondence with Moses’ song in Deut. 32.<sup>45</sup> If the gospels link the exodus motif with Christ, and if the epistles apply it to the church, then the book of Revelation portrays the exodus motif in a comprehensive, global manner as it related to the world.

## Conclusion

Although Childs has correctly divided the book of Exodus so that chapters 1-15 stand alone as a unit, he seems to reject any further structure within that context. In fact, quite to the contrary, he cites various “tensions” in the present form of the text. He cites, for example, a lack of organic unity between the stories of Moses’ birth (chs. 1-2) and his subsequent return to Egypt (ch. 5). The circumcision in 4:24 is said to fit “poorly” with the commission (chs. 3-4). He also says that the relation between the exodus from Egypt after the plagues and the crossing of the sea appears to be “artificial.” His conclusion is that, “the community could tolerate a certain level of literary friction within its scripture.”<sup>46</sup> This conclusion could not be further from the truth. We have demonstrated that Exodus 1-15 was thoughtfully arranged so that there are no real tensions that exist. The canonical form of the text answers all of Childs’ objections.

Because Exodus 1-15 is an intentionally structured, chronologically ordered, historical narrative, it follows that, if the account is true (and we believe it is), then ultimately, God is behind the events portrayed therein. A human author is able to compose a story, but only God can control the events of history. Surely the human author composed his account based upon a series of historical events that were providentially arranged. History is not a series of random events, nor does it arise out of a simple cause and effect relation. There is a “Mind” and a “Power” that controls the events and destinies of men and nations. This should be of great comfort for those who know this “Mind” and “Power” to be God himself.

Since the structure of Exodus 1-15 seems to indicate a historical correspondence between Moses and Israel, it seems reasonable to conclude that Moses is therefore typical or at least symbolic of Israel's national destiny. What happens to the nation is prefigured in Moses. This complete identification is also true of Jesus Christ. It is at least possible, based upon the parallels in the New Testament, to regard Christ as the Greater Moses, who also identified completely with his people. There remains yet one more comment about this correspondence between Moses and Israel. Regarding the "quest for the historical Moses," Childs has stated that "...it remains an unexplored challenge, whether or not one can speak meaningfully of a 'canonical Moses,' by which one would mean a theological profile of Moses that would do justice to the canonical form of the literature which bore eloquent testimony to his place within the divine economy."<sup>47</sup> Now we cannot speak for the whole Pentateuch, or even the whole book of Exodus, but we should be able to see in Exodus 1-15 a "theological profile" of Moses. It is indeed the historical and canonical Moses who theologically "mirrors" the national destiny of his people. In our study of Exodus 1-15 there exists in the antecedent context and the subsequent contexts, both a unity and a diversity of theological function. As to the unity that may be seen, Vos makes the following comment:

"The exodus from Egypt is the Old Testament redemption. This is not an anachronistic, allegorizing manner of speaking. It is based on the inner coherence of Old Testament and New Testament religion itself. These two, however different their forms of expression, are yet one in principle. The same purpose and method of God run through both."<sup>48</sup>

Thus, we may observe in our study that the Old Testament event becomes a paradigm for the new. Christ, the Church and the world, replaces Moses, Israel and Egypt. In both cases, God's program is connected with the furthering of his covenantal dealings with mankind as part of His great plan of redemption. However, there is also a diversity that may be observed in our study. The antecedent Old Testament context acquires many different uses as its theological function changes with regard to contingent situations. Even the period of history in which these different usages occurred is indicative of their function. The didactic, paraenetic, liturgical, typological, and covenantal functions correspond quite well with a period of history in which the growth and preservation of the nation was of great importance. On the other hand, the various eschatological uses and the polemic and penitential functions correspond to the sad state of a nation that is almost beyond hope. The covenantal core is not lost however, because it is taken up again in the New Testament in order that we might be "justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus." (Rom. 3:24)

## END NOTES

<sup>1</sup> J. Alan Groves, "Chiasm as a Structuring Device in Old Testament Narrative" (Unpublished Master's thesis, Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, 1983), p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Groves, p. 150

<sup>3</sup> Brevard S. Childs, personal letter, Oct. 1985.

<sup>4</sup> "Redemption" seems a fitting label here because it is the terminology used by Moses in 15:13 as a summary of God's action.

<sup>5</sup> Raymond B. Dillard, "The Literary Structure of the Chronicler's Solomon Narrative," Journal for the Study of the Old Testament 30 (1984):86.

<sup>6</sup> Richard N. Soulen, Handbook of Biblical Criticism, 2nd ed. (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981), p. 129.

<sup>7</sup> Brevard S. Childs, The Book of Exodus (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1974), p. 184ff.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 196

<sup>9</sup> J. Christiaan Beker, Paul the Apostle (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), p. 115; Childs, The Book of Exodus, p. 54; and Michael Fishbane, Text and Texture (New York: Schocken Books, 1979), p. 68.

<sup>10</sup> William Sanford Lasor, David Allan Hubbard, and Frederic William Bush, Old Testament Survey (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1982), p. 137; and Fishbane, Text and Texture, pp. 70, 74, 147 notes 4 and 9.

<sup>11</sup> Alternate proposals for this chiasm may be found in John N. Welch, ed., Chiasmus in Antiquity (Hildesheim: Gerstenberg, 1981), pp. 93, 303. Notice that this chiasm exceeds the boundaries that we have set for the section according to the main chiasm of Ex. 1-15 (11:1—12:28). We might expect the structure to stop at vs. 28. The question may arise, "If this chiasm of 11:1-12:36 exceeds the boundaries of the section in the main chiasm, is not one of them incorrect? If this smaller chiasm is correct, is not the bigger one incorrect?" The answer to this is "no." The presence of multiple structures in narrative does not necessarily mean that they must be contradictory. In fact, structures may co-exist in a complementary fashion without regard for the structural limits of each other. They are only bound to respect the natural paragraph division of the text. This fact may be demonstrated in Hosea 1-3 where there are three independent structures that coincide throughout. The term divisions of one structure do not necessarily sit "back to back" with the term divisions of another structure when viewed together, but each of the respective terms are legitimate in their own right. Viewing them together might be analogous to viewing two different outlines of one text simultaneously on an overhead projector. Any structure would seem incoherent until one of the outlines was removed from view. Therefore, the limits of a given passage may vary according to which structure one is thinking about. An extensive index of chiasmus, including a selection of smaller structures from Exodus 1-15 may be found in "Chiasmus in Antiquity." Though some of the structures listed may not be legitimate, or at least may need revision, they would be worth investigating as possible clues to some other structure within the book of Exodus. There is no record of chiasm for Exodus 1-15 listed in that book.

<sup>12</sup> see footnote 11 for "multiple structure."

<sup>13</sup> Fishbane, Text and Texture, p. 70. Fishbane says on p. 74, "Early recognition of the thematic connection between

Ex. 4:24-26, dealing with the apotropaic, or protective power of the blood of circumcision, and Ex. 12:13 where a similar power of blood recurs, can be found in ancient Palestinian Targum traditions and the medieval Bible commentary by Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra.”

<sup>14</sup> Childs, The Book of Exodus, p. 2

<sup>15</sup> Fishbane, Text and Texture, p. 63

<sup>16</sup> Charles R. Gianotti, “The Meaning of the Divine Name YHWH,” Bibliotheca Sacra 142 (January-March 1985):48.

<sup>17</sup> cf. Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., Toward an Old Testament Theology (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), p. 106 for his view of the “essentiae” usage of the preposition.

<sup>18</sup> Kenneth Barker and others (eds.), The NIV Stud. Bible (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Bible Publishers, 1985), p. 94.

<sup>19</sup> The chiasmic structure may not be intentional since the events are portrayed chronologically in such a way that there was only one reasonable way to convey the information.

<sup>20</sup> Kenneth Barker and others (eds.), The NIV Study Bible, p. 108. <sup>21</sup> Fishbane, Text and Texture, p. 81.

<sup>22</sup> Claus Westermann, Elements of Old Testament Theology, trans. Douglas M. Stott (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), p. 41.

<sup>23</sup> Peter C. Craigie, The Book of Deuteronomy (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1976), pp. 319-320.

<sup>24</sup> Fishbane, Text and Texture, pp. 122-123.

<sup>25</sup> Barker and others (eds.), The NIV Study Bible, p. 1043.

<sup>26</sup> cf. Chester K. Lehman, Biblical Theology, vol. 1: Old Testament (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1971), p. 328, note 18; and Leonhard Goppelt, Typos, trans. Donald H. Madvig (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), p. 39, note 99.

<sup>27</sup> Barker and others (eds.), The NIV Study Bible, p. 1376.

<sup>28</sup> Fishbane, Text and Texture, p. 132.

<sup>29</sup> for discussion of parallels, cf. Childs, The Book of Exodus, pp. 24-25; Robert H. Gundry, Matthew (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), pp. 33-34; and Isaac M. Kikawada and Arthur Quinn, Before Abraham Was (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1985), p. 118.

<sup>30</sup> Barker and others (eds.), The NIV Study Bible, p. 1444.

<sup>31</sup> Childs, The Book of Exodus, p. 22

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 233.

<sup>33</sup> Gundry, Matthew, p. 34.

<sup>34</sup> Goppelt, Typos, p. 99.

<sup>35</sup> Joachim Jeremias, New Testament Theology (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), p. 270.

<sup>36</sup> I. Howard Marshall, The Gospel of Luke (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978 ), pp. 384-385; and, F.F. Bruce, New Testament Development of Old Testament Themes (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968), p. 32.

<sup>37</sup> Childs, The Book of Exodus, p. 233.

<sup>38</sup> Goppelt, Typos, pp. 189-190.

<sup>39</sup> Bruce, New Testament Development of Old Testament Themes, pp. 34-35

<sup>40</sup> Herman Ridderbos, Paul: An Outline of His Theology, trans. John Richard Dewitt (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), p. 421.

<sup>41</sup> C.K. Barrett, A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians (New York: Harper 8 Row Publishers, 1968), p. 269.

<sup>42</sup> D. Edmond Hiebert, First Peter (Chicago: Moody Press, 1984), pp. 93-94.

<sup>43</sup> Bruce M. Metzger, A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, 3rd ed. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1975). pp- 723-724.

<sup>44</sup> Goppelt, Typos, p. 197.

<sup>45</sup> Childs, The Book of Exodus, p. 234; and, J.B. Smith, A Revelation of Jesus Christ (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1961), pp. 224-225.

<sup>46</sup> Brevard S. Childs, Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), p. 171.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 178.

<sup>48</sup> Geerhardus Vos, Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1948), p. 109.

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