

Some of the key questions that arise in the study of Exodus are these:

When did the Exodus take place? This will have an important bearing on other datable events in the Old Testament. There are higher and lower views and we will summarize them briefly. Where did Israel cross the sea? It is significant that in the Hebrew text the body is called the "Sea of Weeds". Where is Mt. Sinai? What was their route to it? How are Christians to relate to the Ten Commandments today..are they binding? What about the suggestions of theonomy? Alas, alas...we will look at some of them.

Archaeology has been important in the study of Exodus. Mosaic authorship was once rejected because Moses was allegedly illiterate and, therefore, could have neither written the book nor developed such a complex legal code. Now, however, we know he could have written in any of the several languages (due to Egyptian education) and we have several law codes which antedate Moses by centuries. The silence of Egyptian history concerning the exodus was also used as an objection to its historicity, but study of the Egyptian historical texts shows that defeats and setbacks were not mentioned--they were either transformed into "victories" or ignored by the historians.

The Tabernacle was once rejected as a late invention to explain the form of the Solomonic Temple, but the Egyptian nobility used portable structures of a similar pattern as traveling pavilions. Archaeology does not, as we often affirm, prove the Bible but it certainly attests to its essential truthfulness.

Key areas of study. Due to its pivotal nature in redemptive history Exodus has several passages of importance which, properly speaking, enable clearer study of the book as a unit. Some of these are: the revelation of the Divine name (3:1-15); the institution of the Passover (12:1-28); the Ten Commandments (20:1-17); and Moses' plea for Israel to be spared (32:30-34).

To study Exodus better one should read the book as a unit to grasp the historical continuity of the book and to see the interplay between its history and the law. Some special studies might be: comparing the description of the Tabernacle in Exodus and Hebrew; constructing a model tabernacle (see ETERNITY, p. 36, October 1980), studying the process of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, and comparing the plagues with the gods of Egypt.

Exodus has also provided some classic art motifs although the horns of Michelangelo's well known Sculpture of Moses are due to a misunderstanding of Exodus 34:29-35. One of Handel's lesser-known oratorios, "Israel in Egypt," describes the early chapters of Exodus musically. Many folk spirituals derive their imagery from the picture of the deliverance of Israel slavery and, on a lighter note, Charlton Heston's forceful film role as Moses in THE TEN COMMANDMENTS could be called a classic in its own right.

Further reading may include: Kitchen, Kenneth, THE BIBLE IN ITS WORLD (IVP), Cole, R. Alan, EXODUS (IVP), Davis, John. MOSES AND THE GODS OF EGYPT. Firm chronological studies along this line may be had in Walton, John CHRONOLOGICAL CHARTS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT (Zondervan) and most Bible Atlas or Dictionary works will contain good general articles on the subject. As noted earlier, Exodus is "God's Deliverance" following the pattern of Genesis as "God's Selection".