

Equip: Resources on the Book of Exodus

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In Genesis 12, God promises Abram he will have a vast number of descendants who will possess the land of Canaan as their home.

As the book of Exodus opens, the reader learns that while the first of these promises has been realized, the promise of land faces a seemingly insurmountable obstacle as the multitude of Israelites are enslaved in Egypt by a pharaoh who did not know the story of Joseph.

What follows is one of the most well-known stories of the ancient world as the God of Israel orchestrates the Israelites' liberation from slavery and establishes a covenant with them at Mount Sinai. These two events form the foundation for all of Israel's religious thought and cultural identity for centuries.

Indeed, Exodus has maintained a place of prominence in the minds of Jews and Christians over the centuries due to the ways in which its theological message inspires and challenges readers in relation to ideas of liberation, covenant and the nature of the God of the Bible.

Summary of Exodus

Exodus begins with the origin story of one of Israel's central heroes, Moses. Through a series of often miraculous events, Moses is introduced as both prophet and leader.

His pivotal encounter with God at the burning bush establishes a paradigm that becomes central throughout the rest of the biblical story: the interplay

between God's purposes and human agency with the agent's freedom to accept or reject the divine commission.

In the case of Moses, it is somewhat ironic that his bold challenging of God's calling him to confront pharaoh may reveal the personal trait that made him right for the job.

While much of the second half of Exodus is filled with legal pronouncements and details concerning the construction of sacred space, it is important to recognize Israel's law was given within the context of a larger story of liberation and God's provision and patience. It was not simply handed down as an impersonal list of prohibitions and regulations.

There is significant interplay between law and story. The story provides the stage for the giving of the law, and the law illuminates the story. Obedience to the law, therefore, is not a fearful adherence to a legal code but a reverent and grateful response to a God who the people know as liberator before they know as king.

This emphasis on the relationship between a people and their God is continued in the construction of the tabernacle, which underscores the importance of sacrifice and ritual purity in approaching God, but also affirms God's presence among people and the invitation to enter that presence.

***Word Biblical Commentary: Exodus* by John Durham**

The *Word Biblical Commentary* series remains a primary go-to resource due to its deep engagement with the Hebrew language and sensitivity to the literary form and structure of the biblical text. Durham's *Exodus* volume is one of the best in the series.

Durham's ability to balance technical philology with theological reflection, along with his extensive textual notes, provide insight into the nuances of Hebrew vocabulary and syntax and offer his readers a more precise understanding of the text. Additionally, his structure-focused approach reveals underlying literary patterns that help shape the narrative's theological message.

Durham's treatment of key theological themes—covenant, divine presence and liberation—offers rich insights for both scholars and faith communities. His discussion of Yahweh's self-revelation in Exodus 3:14 is particularly noteworthy, as he navigates between traditional and modern interpretations of the divine name.

Overall, Durham's *Exodus* is a valuable resource for students, pastors and scholars seeking a text-sensitive and theologically engaged commentary. While it may not satisfy those seeking exhaustive historical-critical engagement, its careful attention to the Hebrew text, along with its combination of linguistic, theological and literary analysis make it a significant contribution to Exodus studies.

***Interpretation: Exodus* by Terence E. Fretheim**

For those looking for a more pastorally oriented reading of the biblical texts, the *Interpretation* series offers an excellent resource.

Fretheim's *Exodus* volume is clear and engaging and makes complex theological and ethical ideas accessible to both scholars and clergy.

A key strength of Fretheim's approach is his emphasis on the dynamic relationship between God and Israel. He highlights the participatory nature of divine-human interactions, arguing God is not a distant sovereign but

one who invites human agency.

This is particularly evident in his discussion of Moses' intercessory role (Exodus 32-34), where he underscores the responsiveness of God to human appeals. Additionally, his treatment of creation theology in Exodus—especially the interconnections between divine deliverance, law and the shaping of a just community—adds depth to his interpretation.

In line with the goals of the *Interpretation* series, Fretheim's emphasis on theology, however, comes at the expense of sustained engagement with historical-critical issues. While he acknowledges scholarly debates on the composition and dating of Exodus, he does not explore them in detail, instead prioritizing the canonical form of the text. Despite this limitation, Fretheim's ability to connect the text's ancient concerns with contemporary ethical and theological issues ensures its enduring relevance.

Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary: Exodus (2 volumes) by William Johnstone

Johnstone's Exodus commentary is richly informed by intertextual connections, canonical theology and an awareness of the broader biblical tradition.

One of the key strengths of Johnstone's work is his attention to the narrative structure of Exodus. He carefully traces thematic developments, such as divine presence, covenant and the transformation of Israel from an enslaved people into a priestly nation.

His literary analysis is particularly effective in highlighting the rhetorical strategies of the text, including repetition, parallelism and contrast. Additionally, his engagement with theological themes provides valuable

insights for Christian readers, particularly in his discussions of divine revelation and worship.

Another significant feature of this series is the section titled “Connections,” which follows the commentary on each textual unit. Here, the author suggests helpful themes and approaches for teaching and sermon preparation, and it is here that many of Johnstone’s most valuable contributions are found.

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