



Exodus: Rescued to be Sent

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As the story of the Bible unfolds, we have watched the creation of the world, our fall from the presence of God, the hope-lifting call of Abraham, and now formation of Israel [draw diagram]. In particular, we will look at the Israel-defining event—the exodus. There’s considerable debate regarding the historicity of the exodus story, so we’ll look closely at that. Three things with Israel: **Shaping Up**—How does an entire nation shape up from one man? **Getting out**—Enslaved in Egypt, how do they get out? **Drawing In**—Once they are out, what are they meant to do? What is their purpose? Shaping up, Getting out, Drawing In.

Shaping Up

In the calling of Abraham, we saw him obey regardless of the cost, receive blessing without paying God back, in order to bless the world. Abraham is the lynchpin of redemptive history. Let’s see how that shapes up. Instead of trusting God to provide a son through his wife Sara, Abram takes matters into his own hands. He sleeps with one of his servants to get an heir and force the hand of God. It doesn’t work. Abraham isn’t exactly the model husband, but ladies, this is a reminder of who is—**God the Father cares about you more than your husband ever could.** When your husband fails you, look to the Father’s unfailing love. Abraham stands in the line of Adam, not only as the representative of a new humanity, but also as a fallen human. Yet, God provides the promised son—Isaac—and with each generation—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and his twelve sons—the blessing of being fruitful and multiplying is reissued. God will make them a great nation for the world and he doesn’t require perfect people. A great nation through not so great people. Is this different from how we work? We privilege those with power, influence, and merit. When wronged, we shift the blame, right the wrongs, judge others. But God is forgiving. Imperfect people have hope with a perfect God. **Can you identify? How is God’s patient, forgiving grace a word to you?** Isaac has twelve sons, one of whom is called Joseph. Joseph is betrayed by his brothers, left for dead in a hole in the ground, sold into human trafficking. His captors move him to Egypt, where he eventually becomes a servant in Pharaoh’s court. Like everyone else in that age, he integrates his faith and work, counseling the king of Egypt

with the wisdom of his God. He rises to great power and influence, a secretary of state of sorts. Under his administration, Egypt flourishes during a famine, drawing people from all over to purchase their food and survive. His faithfulness becomes a rescue ship for others. His brothers make their way from Canaan to Egypt, where to their surprise, they find their brother Joseph not only alive but in charge! Trembling with fear they wonder if he will seek revenge. After all that's been a generational sin. Adam rejected God's authority, took judgment into his own hands, and shifted the blame to Eve to avoid pain. Babel rejected God's authority, took judgment into their own hands, to become a God. Abram rejected God's authority, took matters into his own hands, and shifted the blame to Sara. **When we reject God's authority, and take matters into our own hands, we become enslaved to a less forgiving God, enslaved to ourselves**, people who are quick to judge not forgive, shift blame not absorb pain, but then comes Joseph, a man mind you who is a recipe for revenge. He's been betrayed, and he's powerful. His brothers ask for his forgiveness. [Joseph wept when they spoke to him. His brothers also came and fell down before him and said, "Behold, we are your servants." But Joseph said to them, "Do not fear, for am I in the place of God?" \(50: 18-19\).](#) What makes Joseph different from his forefathers? He says: [Do not fear, for am I in the place of God?](#) He does not take the place of God. **What does he mean?** Instead of rejecting God's authority, he accepts God's authority. Instead of shifting blame or exacting pain from others, he embraces them and absorbs the pain. He doesn't become a god. He doesn't sit in judgment. Instead, *he acts like a God*, the God he's learned to trust. He forgives like God forgives. Here we have a picture of Christ, who lays down his authority, embraces pain for our sin, and offers us forgiveness. **Can think of an area in life where you're taking judgment into your own hands, and shifting the pain or the blame?**

Getting Out

So where's the nation to bless the world? They're about 70 people, but as time passes and Joseph dies, we're told: ["But the people of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly; they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land was filled with them. Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph \(Exod 1:7\)."](#) Good news—they are multiplying. Bad news—new Pharaoh in town who doesn't respect their God. He sees Israel

as a threat, so he enslaves and oppresses them, building cities for his own glory. Enter Moses. Moses is adopted and raised by raised Egyptian royalty, well-educated and influential, but is called by God to lead Israel out of Egypt, to get them out of slavery and on with God's plan. Now, all of this occurs around 1550-1200, 18th Egyptian Dynasty, the New Kingdom Period. Critical scholars point out that there is no archaeological evidence of Israel's presence in Egypt or anything like an exodus during this time. So they have constructed alternative theories about Israel's origins, which say there was a small group of proto Israelites that left Egypt and gathered people from other tribes in Canaan to form the nation of Israel. Now, there's also no evidence of this, but more importantly, this is the defining event for Israel. No exodus, no Israel. So critical scholars say that once they formed in Canaan, Israel created an exodus myth to unite them and overthrow the peoples of Canaan. This criticism is very important for Christians also since the New Testament appeals to the exodus as the basis for Jesus redeeming work (Luke 9; Acts; Heb 10; 1 Cor 11). **What are we to make of this?** A lot can be said. I'll make one brief point and one longer point. *Briefly*, Israel historian John Bright, points out that exception of Israel's exodus in Egyptian documents comes as no surprise. It was a case of runaway slaves and Pharaohs were not accustomed to documenting their losses. Similarly, Caesar did not record the Christ story. *Second*, and more extensively, the historical data in the exodus story is too reflective of the New Kingdom period to be a fabrication. Let me give a few examples and then one major one. Many of the early Israelite names reflect Egyptian influence: Hophni, Phinehas, and Moses, which is a truncated form of names that mean "begotten of a God", i.e. Thutmoses, Ramesses. Another, the brick-making described in Exodus is precisely what archaeologists describe as essential to structures in that period. Millions of bricks, over a foot long, half as wide, and six inches thick were used. **Now the real question is why would Pharaoh let this massive labor force go?** The Bible describes ten plagues sent by God to judge Egypt for not letting Israel go. Scholars have examined these plagues and questioned their divine origins. In fact, for 7-8 of the plagues they have described natural phenomena that can explain them away. Rain mixed with clay to create a blood-like tint to the water, that would expel frogs, who would die and produce lice and flies. However, there is no causality between the boils and the hail. Regardless, God

could just as easily worked through these natural events. Are we to conclude that the Bible is taking credit from Mother Nature? I think there's a double-sided reason why these plagues are actually the act of YHWH. On the one side the **plague is a polemic**. A close look at Egyptian mythology shows us that many of the plagues corresponded with their gods. For instance, the plague of blood was directed against the god **Khnum**, creator of water and life. The plague of frogs against **Heket** goddess of childbirth represented by the frog. The plague that killed cattle against **Hathor** the mother and sky goddess, rep by cow. Its as if each plague God is saying to the Egyptians, "Ill show you who's in charge, who's got the authority, who's really God." Numbers 33:4 we are told that the Egyptians buried those who had died by the tenth plague, by which plague "[the Lord executed judgments against their gods.](#)" The plague was a polemic against lesser gods. This shows a remarkable level of insight into Egyptian culture, something you couldn't concoct from a distance. Side 1. Side 2: **The plague was also for a people.** **Ziony Zevit** professor of biblical literature at the University of Judaism, points out that in the plagues shows Israel how God is sovereign over the creative elements from Genesis 1. The blood, primordial waters. The frogs the water, the lice the earth, the flies the air, livestock, the animals, the hail & locust the vegetation, darkness the night/day, the firstborn, the first man. We are meant to see "Creation Reversal." Jews would have picked up on the elements and discerned YHWH the Creator at work, decreasing their enemies *and* recreating his people. YHWH's power unequivocally established him as the Creator God, over all other gods, in the minds of Egyptians and as a Redeemer for Israelites. God was getting them out of slavery.

Drawing In

When referring to the exodus rescue, God repeatedly uses the spirit-wing imagery of "bearing them on eagles wings", echoing the Spirit's creative activity in Genesis 1. The exodus rescue is nothing less that the creation of a new people for God's purposes. The plague was for the people. God's redeeming work is plain in the final plague. Through death God brings life. Each Israelite that painted the blood of a lamb on their door would not suffer death judgment of their firstborn. They are rescued under the blood. Similarly, God's new people, the Church, are rescued from under the blood of the final sacrifice—Christ, the



Lamb of God. Now God is drawing in. As Israel leaves, we are told they go up as a mixed multitude, referring to the various ethnic groups. This means Egyptian converts went with them. Amidst the curses, God is blessing Abraham and the nations. He is forming a new people from among the nations to be “[treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation](#)” (19:5-6). What does a priest do? As a **kingdom of priests**, Israel was called to mediate the presence of God to the world. People from many nations would be drawn to her light, to the power and glory of YHWH. Her ways and her God would attract people. As a **holy nation**, their behavior was meant to reflect the character of their holy God. As a kingdom of priests and a holy nation they were to draw the nations into the blessing of God’s presence. They would reveal a God full of authority and of grace, a God who judges and a God who forgives, *under the blood*. Similarly, we are rescued to be sent. The direction changes. Not only do we draw in but we are sent out, to live as a distinct and holy people who bear the hope and forgiveness of Christ. Each movement points us to Christ. In **shaping up** a people we say God has the authority to judge and to forgive. Like Joseph, Jesus possesses authority to absorb out pain and forgive our sins. In **getting out**, God has authority to judge Egypt and rescue a mixed multitude. Like Jesus, he judges and blesses the nations. Finally, **drawing in**, God has authority to topple gods, rescue a people, and send them on a mission to bless the world. In a phrase, *we are rescued to be sent*.