

RELIGION 101: HISTORY & RELIGION OF ISRAEL  
(Dr. Chris Heard • Pepperdine University • Fall 2005)

# MOSES AND THE EXODUS FROM EGYPT


The Pivot of the Pentateuch

## TODAY'S AGENDA

- The exodus story and Israelite history
  - Puzzles that inhibit understanding
  - Problems that inhibit belief
  - Possible responses to problems
- Themes in the exodus story
  - Pharaoh's hardened heart
  - The lessons of the plagues
  - Freedom and slavery

## THE EXODUS AND HISTORY

Rationale



1998

2004


## THE EXODUS AND HISTORY

Puzzles that Inhibit Understanding

- Geography
  - Identification of the "Yam Suph" and Mt. Sinai

## THE EXODUS AND HISTORY

Puzzles that Inhibit Understanding




ISRAEL'S EXODUS FROM EGYPT

0 50 100 miles

Nile R. Sinai Gulf of Suez Red Sea Kadesh-Barnea

## THE EXODUS AND HISTORY

Puzzles that Inhibit Understanding



ISRAEL'S EXODUS FROM EGYPT

0 50 100 miles

Nile R. Sinai Gulf of Suez Red Sea Kadesh-Barnea

Religion 101: The History and Religion of Israel  
Unit 2B: Moses and the Exodus from Egypt

**THE EXODUS AND HISTORY**  
Puzzles that Inhibit Understanding

ISRAEL'S EXODUS FROM EGYPT  
miles  
0 50 100

Sea of Reeds? Nile R. Sinai Peninsula (Mt. Horeb?) Mt. Sinai? (Mt. Horeb?) Mt. Sinai? (Mt. Horeb?) Red Sea

**THE EXODUS AND HISTORY**  
Puzzles that Inhibit Understanding

- Geography
  - Identification of the “Yam Suph” and Mt. Sinai
- Time frame
  - Puzzling features
    - Inconsistent data (Gen 15:13 vs. 15:16 vs. Num 32:39–41/Deut 3:14–15)
    - Uncertain starting point
    - Schematic chronologies
  - Suggested time frames
    - 16th-century exodus (c. 1540 BCE) [almost no scholars]
      - Possible Hyksos synchronism
    - 15th century exodus (c. 1440 BCE) [very few scholars]
      - Better fits 1 Kings 6:1
    - 13th century exodus (c. 1250 BCE) [most scholars]
      - Better fits Egyptian history
      - Better fits Palestinian archaeology

**THE EXODUS AND HISTORY**  
Problems that Inhibit Belief

- Miraculous/supernatural elements
  - The plagues: natural or legendary?
  - Over 2 million Israelites surviving in Sinai?
- Lack of external evidence
  - No Egyptian documentation




**THE EXODUS AND HISTORY**  
Problems that Inhibit Belief

- Miraculous/supernatural elements
  - The plagues: natural or legendary?
  - Over 2 million Israelites surviving in Sinai?
- Lack of external evidence
  - No Egyptian documentation
  - No archaeological remains
    - Of Israelite travelers
    - Of neighboring kingdoms
  - Technological discontinuity

**THE EXODUS AND HISTORY**  
Possible Responses to Problems

- “Extreme” positions
  - Reject biblical narrative altogether
  - Discount (lack of) archaeological evidence
- “Mediating” approaches
  - Compressed narration
  - Exaggerated numbers
  - Large-group assimilation of small-group experience




### THEMES IN THE EXODUS STORY

#### Pharaoh's Hardened Heart

*Who Hardened Pharaoh's Heart?*

1. Unspecified
2. Pharaoh
3. Unspecified
4. Pharaoh
5. Unspecified
6. The LORD
7. Pharaoh
8. The LORD
9. The LORD
10. The LORD


- ♦ Premise: the LORD doesn't *need* Pharaoh's cooperation
- ♦ Purpose of the hardening: to extend the plagues (Exod 7:3; 10:1)
- ♦ Purpose of the plagues: to show the LORD's power (Exod 7:4-5; 9:14-16; 10:2; 12:12)
- ♦ Addressing the moral dilemma (Rom 9:14-24)



### THEMES IN THE EXODUS STORY

#### Lessons of the Plagues


Morning warning	Blood	Flies	Hail
"Untimed" warning	Frogs	Murrain	Locust
No warning	"Gnats"	Boils	"Darkness"
	The LORD is real	The LORD favors Israel	The LORD is incomparable



### THEMES IN THE EXODUS STORY

#### Slavery and Freedom

- ♦ The "liberation" theme
- ♦ Laws for liberated slave-holders
- ♦ Freed to serve
  - "I am the LORD, and I will free you from the burdens of the Egyptians and deliver you from slavery (עֲבָדָה, 'abodah = 'service') to them."
  - "Let my people go, so that they may worship (עָבַד, 'abad = 'serve') me in the wilderness."



### NEXT TIME IN RELIGION 101

#### Unit 2C

#### The Torah's Law Codes

- ♦ Six distinct Torah law codes
- ♦ Biblical attitudes toward biblical law
- ♦ Biblical and ancient Near Eastern law
- ♦ The sin offering and the Day of Atonement