EXPOSITION OF EXODUS

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by

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Canonical Context

All 66 inspired books of the Protestant canon relate to the progressively revealed Messiah-redeemer-ruler metanarrative of the Bible, but not in the same way. Each book either *carries* the metanarrative,[1] *contributes* to it but does not carry it,[2] or *contemplates* the metanarrative.[3] A book's placement into one of these three categories does not necessarily depend on genre, even though a correlation frequently exists. Rather, a book's categorization depends on its contents and its relationship to other books.[4]

In the Messiah-redeemer-ruler metanarrative of Scripture, the following compose the major elements of the story:

Table 1: Elements of the Metanarrative of Scripture

Setting:	Heaven and earth	Gen 1–2
Hero:	God the Father	Gen 1–2
Hero's desire:	Image bearers to rule the earth	Gen 1:26–28
Problem:	Image bearers gave their rule to the serpent	Gen 3
Solution (the plot):	Promise seed will strike the serpent and restore rule to image bearers	Gen 3:15–Rev 19
Turning point:	The Cross	Gospels
Climax:	The Great Tribulation	Rev 6–19
Resolution / denouement:	Image bearers again rule the earth	Rev 20–22

[1] The carrier category refers to biblical books that carry the primary plotline of the Messiah-redeemer-ruler metanarrative of the Bible. Many books of historical narrative and certain parts of prophetic books fall into this category because they carry the Messiah-redeemer-ruler metanarrative. Such books describe the outworking of the promise in Genesis 3:15–16.

[2] The contributor category refers to biblical books that contribute to, but do not carry, the plot of the Messiah-redeemer-ruler metanarrative of the Bible. Most prophetic books and certain parts of the NT epistles fall into this category because while they do not carry the Messiah-redeemer-ruler metanarrative, they contribute important (often prophetic) information about that metanarrative. Additionally, certain historical narratives run in parallel to one another (e.g., Kings and Chronicles, the four Gospels). In these cases, 1–2 Kings function as the carrier and 1–2 Chronicles as the contributor. Among the Gospels, Matthew functions as the carrier and the other three as contributors.

[3] The contemplator category refers to biblical books that neither carry nor contribute to the plot of the Messiah-redeemer-ruler metanarrative of the Bible. Rather, these books reflect upon (contemplate) the realities of that narrative. Books of wisdom, poetry, and most NT epistles fall into this category, because in light of the Genesis 3:15 promised seed having come, they address how the people of God should live until he returns to establish his kingdom.

[4] For this reason, certain biblical books fit into more than one of these three categories.

As shown in Table 1, the Bible as a whole presents God as the hero of the story who desires his image bearers to rule the world on his behalf. This metanarrative begins in the book of Genesis and concludes in the book of Revelation. Genesis presents the setting,[5] the characters,[6] the plot problem,[7] and the beginning of the rising action. The problem identified in Genesis 3 did not change God's desire for his image bearers to rule the world. The prophecy of Genesis 3:15–16 indicates a war between the serpent's seed and the woman's seed. This battle is the central conflict in the entire biblical narrative; a conflict not resolved until Revelation 20. In this prophecy, God promised the seed of the woman—a man—would defeat the serpent, restore humanity to the garden, and restore rule of the earth to God's image bearers. The anticipation of this promised seed drives the plot of the biblical narrative. The entire plot of the metanarrative thus revolves around how Genesis 3:15–16 comes to fruition. This prophecy reaches the first phase of its fulfillment in Revelation 20 in the thousand-year kingdom of Christ on earth, and its final phase of fulfillment in Revelation 21–22 in the new heaven and earth.

In narrative (or a metanarrative such as the whole Bible), "The story is the meaning."[8] Every book must be interpreted in light of the plot problem, rising action, and resolution. Recent decades have seen advances in narrative criticism applied to biblical texts which have brought to light the complexity and skillful crafting of biblical narratives. Such complexity is not merely limited to individual biblical books. As one scholar noted, "Narrative structure, usually interconnected to plot or characterization, may extend across several books, supporting the evangelical concept that the divine author provides unity and continuity in the biblical story."[9] Thus, even though this paper will argue for Mosaic human authorship, it recognizes the place of Exodus in light of the divine author's total metanarrative. Indeed, "The Bible's total story sketches in narrative form the meaning of all reality."[10]

The book of Genesis traces the line of promise from Adam to Noah to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Judah. God's covenant with Abraham (Gen 15) and his descendants through Isaac and Jacob highlighted their role to be a blessing to all nations (Gen 12). In the covenant ceremony, God also told Abraham, "You must surely know that your descendants shall be as aliens in a land not their own. And they shall serve them and they shall oppress them four hundred years. And also the nation that they serve I will judge. Then afterward they shall go out with great possessions … And the fourth generation shall return here [Canaan]" (Gen 15:13–14, 16)."[11] That prophetic statement provides a basic overview of the events described in books of Exodus through Joshua. The concluding chapters of Genesis explain how the family of Jacob /

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[5] Heaven and earth, Genesis 1–2.

[6] God, the hero of the story; mankind, the object of God's desire; and the antagonist, the serpent.

[7] Despite God's desire for mankind to rule the earth on his behalf, the man and woman gave their rule over to the serpent (Gen 3).

[8] Leland Ryken, *Words of Delight* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 88.

[9] J. Daniel Hays, "An Evangelical Approach to Old Testament Narrative Criticism," *BSac* 166 (2009): 8.

[10] Richard Bauckham, *God and the Crisis of Freedom: Biblical and Contemporary Perspectives* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 64.

[11] Unless otherwise stated, all English Bible quotations come from the Lexham English Bible (LEB).

Israel came to live in Egypt, and the book of Exodus picks up from that point and describes the outworking of that prophetic statement in Israel's sojourning, oppression, going out from that foreign nation with great possessions, and (the early stages of) returning to Canaan. Exodus also explains various important aspects of the metanarrative: (1) how a group of enslaved tribesmen became a unified nation, (2) the foundational place of Moses in delivering the Law of Yahweh, (3) Israel's place as Yahweh's treasured possession (סְגֻלָּה), (4) the nation's role as a kingdom of priests among all the Gentile nations (Exod 19:5–6), and (5) the covenant relationship between Yahweh and national Israel (Exod 19–24).

Exodus therefore *carries* the narrative begun in Genesis, but does not conclude it. Indeed, at the close of Exodus, the Israelites had still not reached the Promised Land. The books of the Pentateuch (and beyond) form a unified narrative. Genesis depends on further books to continue carrying the metanarrative, just as the latter books depend on the former. Jesus called the Pentateuch "the book of Moses" (Mark 12:26). These five books, then, form one successive serial narrative: the conclusion of Genesis portrays the blessing of Yahweh on the sons of Israel as they settle in Egypt, and Exodus begins in Egypt with the family growing over numerous generations. Exodus concludes with the Israelites' tabernacle in the wilderness being filled with Yahweh's glory, while Leviticus and Numbers open with Yahweh speaking to Moses from that tabernacle. Numbers closes where Deuteronomy begins and ends, on the plains of Moab. Just as humanity was banished east of the garden (Gen 3), now the nation of promise camped on the eastern shore of the Jordan ready to head west into the Promised Land. Deuteronomy closes with the death of Moses, and Joshua begins, "After the death of Moses" (Josh 1:1) and recounts Israel's failed attempt to dispossess the Canaanites of the land, and closes with Joshua's death. Judges opens with, "After the death of Joshua" (Judg 1:1) and closes with the failure of the judges. 1–2 Samuel and 1–2 Kings successively trace Israel's history as the priests, kings, and prophets fail to produce a lasting covenant faithfulness in the nation. Just as post-flood humanity had descended into rebellion at the tower of Babylon (Gen 11), now the chosen nation was exiled east into the new Babylon, echoing the exile east of the garden.[12] Thus, Genesis through Kings *carry* the plot of the Messiah-redeemer-rule metanarrative.

While the Scriptures certainly have an overarching message based on the entire metanarrative, each book does indeed have a specific message and intended response for its original audience. For the book of Exodus, the message and intended response are discussed in the sections below on occasion and proposed argument exposition.

Glossary of Literary Terms and Devices[13]

Acrostic: A poem in which the successive units begin with the consecutive letters of the Hebrew alphabet.
Allegory: A work of literature in which some or all of the details have a corresponding other meaning and refer to either a concept or historical particular.

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[12] Gary E. Schnittjer, *Torah Story: An Apprenticeship on the Pentateuch*, second edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2023), 38.

[13] This list is a composite of terms from three sources: (1) Ryken, *Words of Delight*, 513–17, (2) Schnittjer, *Torah Story*, 8–19, and (3) David R. Klingler, "Bible Exposition Template and Instructions," unpublished manuscript, 2023.

Alliteration: involves the repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of words in close proximity, used to create rhythm or emphasis.
Allusion: a reference to another work of literature, person, or event, often used to enhance meaning or provide deeper insight.
Ambiguity: the use of language that allows for multiple interpretations or meanings, adding complexity and depth to the narrative.
Anti-hero: a literary protagonist who exhibits an absence of the character traits that are conventionally associated with literary heroes.
Anti-romance: a work of literature, or part of a work of literature, that presents unideal experience; a literary world of total bondage and the absence of the ideal.
Anthropomorphism: the attribution of human characteristics, emotions, or behaviors to animals, inanimate objects, or deities.
Antagonist: the character or force that opposes the protagonist, thus creating conflict in the narrative.
Antithetic parallelism: a two-line poetic unit in which the second line states the truth of the first in the opposite way or introduces a contrast.
Aphorism: a short, memorable statement of truth.
Archetype: an image, plot motif, or character type that recurs throughout literature and is part of a reader's total literary experience.
Blazon: a love poem that praises the attractive features and / or virtues of the beloved by means of a catalogue or listing technique.
Calling stories: in the Gospels, stories in which Jesus calls a person to follow him or to respond to a command. Also called vocation stories.
Characterization: the process by which the author reveals the personality, traits, and attributes of a character or group of characters in a narrative.
Climax: the moment of peak tension / plot conflict in the story.
Climactic parallelism: a form of parallelism in which the first line is left incomplete until the second line repeats part of it and then makes it a whole statement by adding to it.
Comedy: a story with a U-shaped plot in which the action begins in prosperity, descends into potentially tragic events, and rises to a happy ending.
Conflict / plot tension: the central struggle or problem between opposing forces that drives the plot forward. This can be internal (within a character) or external (between characters or between a character and an external force). The plot tension generally revolves around the protagonist's desire and the antagonistic elements (see "antagonist") working against that desire.
Conflict stories: Gospel stories that narrate Jesus' controversies with an opposing person or group. Also called controversy stories.
Denouement: the last phase of a story, following the climax; literally the "tying up of loose ends."
Didactic: having the intention or impulse to teach.
Discourse: an address to an audience.
Dramatic monologue: a literary work in which a single speaker addresses an implied but silent listener and in which various details keep this dramatic situation alive in the reader's consciousness.
Emblem: a symbolic and sometimes pictorial image to which a person or thing is compared.
Emblematic blazon: a love poem that lists the features of the beloved and compares them to objects or emblems in nature or human experience.

Encomium: a work of literature that praises an abstract quality or a generalized character type.
Encounter stories: gospel stories in which a person is confronted with the claims of Jesus, which that person must either accept or reject.
Epic: a long narrative having a number of conventional characteristics.
Epiphany: a moment of heightened insight in a literary work.
Epistle: a letter that attains literary status by virtue of the literary techniques used in it.
Epithalamion: a lyric poem that celebrates a wedding.
Epithet: an exalted title for a person or thing; a feature of the high style, especially as found in epic.
Explication: the literary term for close reading of a text. It implies not only careful analysis of a text but also putting one's analysis into organized form for written or oral presentation to an audience.
Exposition: the opening phase of a story in which the writer presents the background information that the reader needs in order to understand the plot that will subsequently unfold.
Expository writing: writing whose main purpose is to convey information.
Ellipsis: the author may drop an element of what is expected in the story in order to draw attention to it.
Extended Echo Effect: the repetition of parallel ordering, elements, or features in multiple narrative units (A-B-C, A-B-C). Similar to "typological pattern," but without the inclusion of prophetic expectation.
Flashback: a scene that interrupts the narrative to show events that happened at an earlier time, providing background or context.
Foil: something within a work of literature that heightens or sets off a main element in the work. A foil is usually a contrast (either a character, event, or image), but sometimes it is a parallel.
Foreshadowing: involves hints or indications of what is to come later in the story, creating anticipation or suspense.
Folk literature: literature couched in the language of everyday speech and appealing to the common person. Also called popular literature.
Genre: a literary type or kind.
Hero: a protagonist who is exemplary and representative of a whole community.
Hero story, heroic narrative: a story built around the character and exploits of a protagonist who is exemplary and representative of a whole community.
Hybrid forms: narratives that combine elements of one or more genres.
Hyperbole: a figure of speech in which a writer uses conscious exaggeration for the sake of effect, usually emotional effect.
Imagery: descriptive language that appeals to the senses, helping to create a vivid mental picture for the reader.
Image: any concrete picture of reality or human experience, including any sensory experience, a setting, a character, or an event.
Inclusio: the bracketing of a unit of text identified by the repetition of features or elements at the beginning and end of the unit.
Interchange: an alternation of elements in the story which can cause heightened literary irony or develop comparative imaging.
Irony: a contrast between expectation and reality which can take various forms:

- **Verbal Irony:** occurs when a speaker says one thing but means another.
- **Situational Irony:** occurs when there is a discrepancy between what is expected to

happen and what actually occurs.

Dramatic Irony: a situation where the reader knows something which some or all the characters in a story are ignorant.

Janus: a bidirectional turning point looking both backward and forward.

Juxtaposition: placing two contrasting elements side by side to highlight their differences or create a particular effect.

Comparison: the juxtaposition of similar elements such as words, imagery, or events.

Contrast: the juxtaposition of dissimilar elements such as words, imagery, or events.

Lyric: a short poem containing the thoughts or feelings of a speaker. The emotional quality, even more than the reflective, is usually considered the differentia of lyric.

Metaphor: a figure of speech in which the writer makes an implied comparison between two phenomena.

Miracle stories: gospel narratives that focus on miracles that Jesus performed.

Motif: a recurring element, theme, or idea in a narrative that has symbolic significance and helps to develop the story's themes.

Narrative Perspective (Point of View): the lens through which the story is told, affecting the reader's perception. Common perspectives include:

First-Person: the narrator is a character in the story, using "I" or "we."

Second-Person: the narrator addresses the reader directly using "you."

Third-Person Limited: the narrator is outside the story but knows the thoughts and feelings of one character.

Third-Person Omniscient: the narrator knows all the thoughts and feelings of all characters.

Narrative space: narrators may employ physical space / locations as part of the setting, but may also assign symbolic meaning to certain physical spaces.

Narrative sequence: narrators may employ dischronological narrative in the form of previews or flashbacks in an advantageous way to the story.

Narrative time: in real history, time is a constant. But in narrative literature, the narrator may speed up (pass many years briefly) or slow down (focus an extended portion of text in a brief window of time) according to his discretion.

Normative character: a character in a story who expresses or embodies what the storyteller wishes us to understand is correct.

Occasional literature: a work of literature that takes its origin from a particular historical event or a particular situation in the writer's life.

Ode: an exalted lyric poem that celebrates a dignified subject in a lofty style.

Parable: a brief narrative that explicitly embodies one or more themes.

Paradox: an apparent contradiction that upon reflection is seen to express a genuine truth; the contradiction must be resolved or explained before we see its truth.

Parallelism: the verse form in which all biblical poetry is written. The general definition that will cover the various types of parallelism is as follows: two or more lines that form a pattern based on repetition or balance of thought or grammar. The phrase thought couplet is a good working synonym.

Stairstep parallelism: a type of parallelism in which the last key word of a line becomes the first main word in the next line.

Synonymous parallelism: a type of parallelism in which two or more lines state the same idea in different words but in similar grammatical form; the second line repeats the content of all or part of the first line.

Synthetic parallelism: a type of parallelism in which the second line completes the thought of the first line, but without repeating anything from the first line. also called growing parallelism.

Parody: a work of literature that parallels but inverts the usual meaning of a literary genre or a specific earlier work of literature.

Passion stories: gospel stories that narrate the events surrounding the trial, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

Pastoral: literature in which the setting, characters, and events are those of the shepherd's world.

Personification: a figure of speech in which human attributes are given to something nonhuman, such as animals, objects, or abstract qualities.

Plot: the sequence of events in a story, usually based on a central conflict and having a beginning, middle, and end.

Plot Twist: an unexpected or surprising turn of events in a narrative that alters the direction of the story or changes the reader's understanding of the plot.

Poetic justice: the feature of stories by which good characters are rewarded and evil characters are punished.

Poetic license: figurative language that is not literally true or factual.

Proportion: highlighting a work's emphasis by the quantitative amount it occupies in the narrative.

Protagonist: the leading character in a story, whether sympathetic or unsympathetic.

Proverb: a concise, memorable expression of truth.

Pun: a play on words, often using a word that sounds like another word but that has a different meaning.

Repetition: the recurrence of similar or identical elements (words, actions, concepts).

Resolution: following the climax, the part of the story where the conflict is resolved and the narrative comes to a conclusion. It ties up loose ends and provides closure for the characters and the plot.

Rhetorical question: a figure of speech in which the writer asks a question whose answer is so obvious that it is left unstated; a question asked, not to elicit information, but for the sake of effect, usually an emotional effect.

Rising Action: rising action is the building of tension as the plot conflict escalates towards the climax.

Sarcasm: the use of irony to mock or convey contempt, often through exaggerated statements that are not meant to be taken literally.

Satire: the exposure, through ridicule or rebuke, of human vice or folly.

Satiric norm: the standard by which the object of attack is criticized in a satire.

Setting: the time and place in which a story occurs.

Simile: a figure of speech in which the writer compares two phenomena, using the explicit formula "like" or "as."

Suspense: the feeling of anticipation or anxiety about what will happen next in the story, often created through uncertainty or danger.

Symbol: any detail in a work of literature that in addition to its literal meaning stands for something else.

Symbolism: involves the use of symbols to represent ideas or concepts beyond their literal meaning, often conveying deeper significance.
Theme: a generalization about life that a work of literature as a whole embodies or implies.
Tone: the attitude or emotional stance of the narrator or author towards the subject matter, conveyed through word choice and style.
Tragedy: a narrative form built around an exceptional calamity stemming from the protagonist's wrong choice.
Turning point (character): the place in a narrative where a character's characterization changes significantly due to events in the plot.
Turning point (plot): the point from which, at least in retrospect, the reader can begin to see how the plot conflict will be resolved.
Typological pattern: the prophetic expectation of similarities in character or events. Similar to "extended echo effect," but with the inclusion of prophetic expectation.
Voice: the distinct personality and style of the narrator or author, influencing how the story is perceived.
Well-made plot: a plot that unfolds according to the following pattern: exposition (background information), inciting moment (or inciting force), rising action, turning point (the point from which, at least in retrospect, the reader can begin to see how the plot conflict will be resolved), further complication, climax, and denouement.
Witness stories: gospel stories in which either Jesus or another character testifies about Jesus or his works. Also called testimony stories.

Occasion

Who?

The text itself never explicitly identifies its author, although Jesus and other New Testament authors believed in Mosaic authorship.[14] This paper, then, assumes Mosaic authorship, although allowance for later inspired revisions is acceptable.[15] Indeed, Moses was an eyewitness to virtually all the events recorded in Exodus. Appropriation of oral tradition[16] or written tradition[17] seems highly unlikely except possibly for genealogical passages. Multiple places in the Pentateuch note Moses writing (Exod 17:14; 24:4; 34:27–28; Num 33:2; Deut 28:58, 61; 29:20–21, 27; 31:9, 22, 24). Joshua also noted the Mosaic origin of the written law (Josh 8:31–34).

The name "Moses" is a wordplay on the verb מׇשׇה, "to draw out."

To Whom?

The text never explicitly identifies its audience. However, it is highly probable that Moses wrote Exodus for the generation of Israelites who grew up during the wilderness wanderings and would soon enter the Promised Land. He also intended it to be read by subsequent generations of Israelites, who would require much of the same information.

When and Where?

Moses most likely wrote Exodus during the forty years of wandering in the wilderness. The two most commonly accepted dates for the Exodus and subsequent wilderness wanderings are either the late 15th century BC or the late 13th century BC. Table 2 identifies the date stamps of major events relative to the Exodus as described in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. Certain events, like the setting up and anointing of the tent of meeting, are described in all three books.

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[14] See Matthew 8:4; 19:7–8; Mark 7:10; 10:3; 12:26; Luke 5:14; 20:37; 24:44; Rom 10:19; 1 Cor 9:9; 2 Cor 3:15; etc.

[15] Presumably the editorial work, if any, was of the minor sort. This argument for Exodus, as with all Bible arguments by this present author, reject wholesale the Graf-Wellhausen hypothesis of JEDP composition of the Pentateuch / Hexateuch. The hypothesis suffers from several fatal flaws. First, they applied a biological evolutionary framework—all the rage in the nineteenth century—to the development of religion, from simple to complex. Second, they had rationalistic prejudices against the supernatural. Third, they committed the gross logical fallacy of begging the question, commencing (and concluding) with their *a priori* beliefs. They were selective in highlighting evidence if it aligned with their view and ignoring or downplaying that which that did not. Fourth, they blatantly ignored developments in archaeology and other fields that would have forced them to revise their views. Fifth, they freely emended or excised portions of text inimical to their theory. Sixth, the use of names of God as deterministic of authorship has long since been shown as fallacious. Lastly, Graf and Wellhausen, as with other German liberals of their century, exhibited an arrogant over-assurance in their own work. They employed circular logic, assuming their starting hypothesis as true and then forcing all the evidence to support it. See R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1969), 505–42.

[16] Passed down from generation to generation.

[17] There are no extant manuscripts of written sources Moses may have used.

Table 2: Date Stamps Relating to the Exodus

Date (in relation to the Exodus)	Event	Reference
Year 1, month 1, day 15	Israelites depart Rameses	Num 33:1
Year 1, month 2, day 15	Israelites depart Elim for Desert of Sin	Exod 16:1
Year 1, month 3, day 15(?)[18]	Israelites arrive at Sinai	Exod 19:1
Year 2, month 1, day 1	Tabernacle set up and anointed	Exod 40:2, 17; Lev 8:10
Year 2, month 1, day 1[19]	Moses finished setting up the tabernacle	Num 7:1
Year 2, month (2?),[20] day 1	Command for first census	Num 1:1
Year 2, month 2, day 1	First census	Num 1:18
Year 2, month 1, day 14	Israel celebrates the Passover in the Desert of Sinai	Num 9:1–4
Year 2, month 2, day 20	Departure from Sinai	Num 10:11
Year (?), Month 1, day (?)[21]	Death of Miriam in Desert of Zin	Num 20:1
Year 40, month 5, day 1	Death of Aaron at Mount Hor	Num 33:38

Why?

The major inciting events for which Moses wrote Exodus were his upcoming death[22] and the upcoming conquest of Canaan.[23] Knowing of his inability to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land, he wanted to ensure that they—and subsequent generations of Israelites—would keep the Law and function as Yahweh's kingdom of priests. As Yahweh had delivered the Law through the mediatorial hand of Moses to the Israelites, Moses thus sought to establish his credibility as the lawgiver through the narrative of Exodus. As evidenced by the nearly constant

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[18] Exodus 19:1 does not provide an ordinal for the day, but rather mentions, בַּיּוֹם הַזֶּה "on this day," possibly meaning exactly two months after departing. Since the departure was on the 15th of the first month, the arrival at Sinai, in this case, would be the 15th of the third month.

[19] No date stamp is given in Numbers 7:1. However, the date stamp for the exact same event is provided in Exodus 40:17, thus the date is known.

[20] The month is not given in Numbers 1:1. However, 1:18 records that it was the first day of the second month, and it seems unlikely that the command in 1:1 and the carrying out of that command in 1:18 would be spoken of in such proximity while referring to different months.

[21] As the departure from Sinai occurred in the second month of the second year, and Miriam was still alive at that point, her death in the "first month" must be in the third year at the earliest, if not later.

[22] Moses knew he would die prior to entering the Promised Land. Yahweh had declared as much: "But Yahweh said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you have not trusted in me, to regard me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this assembly into the land that I have given to them"" (Num 20:12); and Moses repeated that idea elsewhere: "And Yahweh was angry with me because of you, and he swore that I would not cross the Jordan and that I would not go to the good land that Yahweh your God is giving you as an inheritance. For I am going to die in this land; I am not going to cross the Jordan, but you are going to cross, and you are going to take possession of this good land" (Deut 4:21–22).

[23] As per Genesis 15:13–16.

attacks on Moses' leadership in the book of Numbers, many of the Israelites, including future generations, would wonder about Moses as the Israelites had: "Who appointed you as a commander and judge over us?" (2:14), and even as Moses himself had: "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and that I should bring the Israelites out from Egypt?" (3:10). The book of Exodus answers these questions. The narrative portrays Moses as the protagonist and the one especially chosen and commissioned by Yahweh for the task. The narrative demonstrates the foundational role he played in delivering Israel from Egypt and in giving the Law to the nation. Looking ahead to after his death, Moses knew that through keeping the Law and celebrating the Passover feast, the Israelites would ensure a continued knowledge of the character of the God with whom they had entered covenant, their identity as a holy nation, a kingdom of priests, and the treasured possession of that God (Exod 19:5–6). Ultimately, Moses wrote Exodus so that after his death, the Israelites would follow the Law, fulfill their covenant obligations to Yahweh, and function as a kingdom of priests and holy nation.

Genre

The book of Exodus was written as an historical narrative. Significant portions of legal and ritual text, and even poetry, do not change the narrative genre to a legal or poetic genre. Rather, the legal and poetic texts form a part of the narrative.

Proposed Message Statement

In order to address his upcoming death and the Israelites' upcoming conquest of Canaan after decades of wandering in the wilderness, Moses wrote an historical narrative to the generation of Israelites about to enter the Promised Land in order to (1) establish his own credibility as deliverer, prophet, and lawgiver, and (2) describe the Israelites' identity as a holy nation and kingdom of priests in covenant with Yahweh, so that the Israelites would fearlessly conquer Canaan,[24] live in covenant faithfulness according to the Law, and fulfill their role as a kingdom of priests and holy nation.

Proposed Outline

I. The serpent strikes the woman (1:1–22)
II. Yahweh visits his people (2:1–4:31)
III. Contest between Yahweh and Pharaoh (5:1–11:10)
IV. Passover and Exodus (12:1–15:21)
V. The leader of Israel (15:22–18:27)
VI. Israel at Sinai (19:1–24:14)
VII. Cultic instructions (24:15–31:18)
VIII. The golden calf (32:1–35)
IX. Leaving Sinai (33:1–35:3)
X. Constructing the tabernacle (35:4–40:38)

[24] The Israelites needed to know and trust that Yahweh would fulfill his promise to Abraham to bring his descendants (the audience) into the Promised Land and to give it to them as an eternal possession.

Use of Rhetoric in Exodus

Classical rhetoric employes three modes and three species of rhetoric. The three modes of rhetoric include *logos*,[25] *pathos*,[26] and *ethos*.[27] The three species include judicial,[28] epideictic,[29] and deliberative[30] rhetoric.[31] As will be demonstrated in the proposed argument exposition below, Moses primarily made use of ethical rhetoric for an overall deliberative purpose. That is, knowing of his upcoming death and inability to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land, he wanted the nation to keep the Law and fulfill their role as a kingdom of priests after he was gone. In order to achieve that deliberative purpose, he sought to establish his credibility (*ethos*) as deliverer, prophet, and lawgiver. Thus, his portrayal of himself in the narrative as the protagonist, mediator, and the one especially chosen and commissioned by Yahweh does exactly that. Specifically, in the narrative of Exodus, Moses highlighted:

- The providential circumstances of his birth
- His failed attempt to rescue Israel in his own strength
- His specific commissioning for the task by Yahweh
- The miracles / judgments brought upon Egypt by his hand
- His leading Israel out of Egypt
- His going up the mountain alone to meet Yahweh
- His delivering of the Law / Book of the Covenant to Israel
- His judgment of the rebels
- His intercession for the deliverance of the other Israelites
- His role in delivering the plans of the Tabernacle
- His overall obedience to Yahweh

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[25] The rhetoric of *logos* employs logical arguments intended to appeal to rational principles found within the author's discourse.

[26] The rhetoric of *pathos* employs arguments intended to arouse an emotional reaction and play upon the audience's feelings.

[27] The rhetoric of *ethos* makes ethical appeals on the basis of credibility: good character or authority.

[28] With judicial rhetoric, the author seeks to persuade the audience to make a judgment about events that occurred in the past. This judgment often deals with questions of truth or justice, and can be positive (a defense or "apology" of correctness / innocence) or negative (a prosecution, emphasizing guilt).

[29] With epideictic rhetoric, the author seeks to persuade his audience to hold or reaffirm a certain point of view in the present time. The author wants to increase (or decrease / undermine) his audience's asset to a certain value or belief. To this end, epideictic rhetoric will frequently use examples of *praise* and *blame*.

[30] With deliberative rhetoric, the author seeks to persuade the audience to take (or not take) some action in the (often near) future. Deliberative rhetoric deals with questions of self-interest and future benefits for the audience, and appears in the form of exhortation (positive) or warning (negative).

[31] For a complete discussion of classical rhetoric in biblical studies, see George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, Studies in Religion (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984).

These elements portrayed in the narrative of Exodus provide the ethical argument (*ethos*) for why the Israelites should listen to him and follow the Law he delivered, thus becoming a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

Proposed Argument Exposition

In **the serpent strikes the woman (1:1–22)**, Moses depicted an outworking of the ongoing battle between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman (Gen 3:15). The introductory ו (1:1) formally links Exodus with Genesis,[32] as does the summary of the family's history of moving to Egypt (1:1–6). Yahweh had foretold Abraham, "You must surely know that your descendants shall be as aliens in a land not their own. And they shall serve them and they shall oppress them four hundred years. And also the nation that they serve I will judge. Then afterward they shall go out with great possessions … And the fourth generation shall return here [Canaan]" (Gen 15:13–14, 16). This statement prophetically summarizes a significant portion of the book of Exodus. In a case of situational irony, by oppressing the Israelites, the Egyptians were unwittingly fulfilling the prophecy. Pharaoh's words and actions against the Israelites identify him as the primary antagonist in Exodus.[33] Moses employed narrative space in his depiction of the land of Egypt as an oppressive nation outside of the Promised Land. Symbolically, the Israelites being in Egypt thus has negative connotations.

After the eleven sons of Jacob / Israel moved to Egypt (Joseph was already there, 1:5) and passed away (1:6),[34] the Israelites prospered numerically as an outworking of God's promise to Abraham (Gen 12:2; 15:5; 17:4, etc.).[35] But in response to this blessing of God, the Egyptian nation (already identified in Genesis as serpent seed)[36] oppressed Israel (1:8–14) and sought to wipe out the line of promise (1:16).[37] Literarily, this is the inciting event in the book of Exodus: much of the plot will revolve around the tension between the two nations who represent the desire of the serpent (Pharaoh / Egypt) and the desire of the woman (Moses / Israel) as carrier of the promised seed. Pharaoh's exhortation that the Egyptians "deal shrewdly" (from the root חכם,

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[32] G. I. Davies, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Exodus 1–18*, edited by G. I. Davies and C. M. Tuckett, Vol. 1 & 2, International Critical Commentary (London: T&T Clark, 2020), 1:125. Indeed, the introductory ו is also used in Leviticus 1:1 and Numbers 1:1, identifying the story as a unified literary composition.

[33] Pharaoh was ruling with the serpent as per the pattern established in Genesis 4:7 with Cain.

[34] The death of Joseph was already noted in Genesis 50:26. The repetitive mention of his death, and his brothers and all that generation functions rhetorically to show that despite death, the Israelites still multiplied in Egypt (NET note 11, Exod 1:6).

[35] The language in 1:7 with the verbs פרה (to be fruitful), שׁרץ (to swarm / multiply), רבה (to multiply / become numerous), and מלא (to fill) הָאָרֶץ (the earth / land) point back to God's blessing on humanity in Genesis 1:28 which employs the same words in the same order (פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ וּמִלְאוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ), and also to Genesis 9:7 with Noah (פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ שִׁרְצוּ בָאָרֶץ וּרְבוּ־בָהּ). שׁרץ (to swarm) also appears in God's creation of aquatic life (Gen 1:20–21).

[36] Egypt / Mizraim is identified as the son of Ham, the usurper (Gen 10:6) and thus the nation is characterized as serpent seed. See the author's exposition of Genesis for more details. Further, the fact that the blessing of God on the Israelites alarms the Egyptians (1:9–10) hints that they are antagonists to Israel.

[37] That the new Pharaoh did not know Joseph (1:8) is a foreshadow of the next Pharaoh who does not know Yahweh (5:2).

"to be wise / skillful") with Israel is verbal irony because their treatment of Israel will lead to the destruction of Egypt.[38] That the land was "filled" with Israelites (1:7) at the beginning of Exodus and the glory of Yahweh "filled" the tabernacle (40:34) at its conclusion form an inclusio which literarily frames the entire narrative. The story thus moves from twelve tribes filling the land of Egypt to Yahweh's presence filling the tabernacle in the midst of his people.[39]

The midwives' refusal to kill the male infants (1:17) shows they valued the promised seed. Accordingly, God blessed them (1:20–21), thus vindicating their actions and showing his blessing to multiply Israel despite the attempts of the serpent seed. As an outworking of God's promise to "curse those who curse you" (Gen 12:3), Pharaoh's command to drown all the male infants (1:22) results in situational irony because it will result in the drowning of Pharaoh's army (14:28), an act of poetic justice.

This section thus explains to Moses' Israelite audience their history and how Yahweh blessed them and protected them from the desire of the serpent to prevent the birth of the promised seed. Since Yahweh had proven himself trustworthy to protect the nation in the past, they could therefore trust his leading in the conquest against serpent seed nations in the Promised Land. This section also provides the setting into which Moses could explain the providential circumstances of his birth and upbringing.

In **Yahweh visits his people (2:1–4:31)**, Moses identified his providential origins and his divine appointment as proof for his status as deliverer of Israel.[40] Literarily, Moses becomes the protagonist and hero of the story. His central role in leading Israel out of Egypt provides credibility for why his Israelite audience—and future generations of Israelites—should keep the Passover feast and obey the laws he delivered to the nation.

On Joseph's deathbed, he prophetically foretold, "I am about to die, but God will certainly visit (פקד) you and bring you up from this land to the land that he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob" (Gen 50:24).[41] When Yahweh revealed himself at the burning bush, he instructed Moses, "Go and gather the elders of Israel and say to them, 'Yahweh, the God of your ancestors, appeared to me, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, "I have carefully attended (פקד) to you and what has been done to you in Egypt"" (3:16). And when Moses spoke with the elders of Israel, "The people believed when they heard that Yahweh had attended to (פקד) the Israelites and that he had seen their misery, and they knelt down and they worshiped" (4:31). Thus, Yahweh's selection of Moses was a key step on the way to fulfilling Genesis 15:13–16. Yahweh "visiting" / "carefully attending to" Moses (3:16) and Israel (4:31) resulted in

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[38] Pharaoh's advisors demanded of him, "Do you not yet know that Egypt is destroyed?" (10:7). Egypt's destruction is talionic justice (cursing, in this case) as per God's promise in Genesis 12:3.

[39] Schnittjer, *Torah Story*, 168.

[40] See NET note 1, Exodus 2:1.

[41] This same verb, פקד, was used again in the following verse: "God will surely visit you, and you shall bring up my bones from here" (Gen 50:25). The verb was also used in Genesis 21:1 of Yahweh visiting Sarah to bring about the conception of Isaac, as he had previously promised. The exact meaning of פקד is difficult to nail down (*HALOT*, s.v. פקד). In these contexts, it conveys the general meaning of actionable, attentive care for the object of the verb. Alternatively, פקד is also used of God visiting the Amalekites to destroy them (1 Sam 15:2). In any case, the word implies God's action in directing earthly matters.

the Israelites believing and worshiping Yahweh (4:31).[42] Moses' Israelite audience could thus be assured of his place in God's program for Israel.

When Moses' mother gave birth to him, she saw (ראה) that he was good (טוב) (2:2), an important and not infrequent lexical combination.[43] In this context, it indicates that the mother was trusting Yahweh to bring about the promised seed. Her placing the boy in a תֵּבָה ("ark," also used in Genesis 6:14 of Noah's ark) is literary repetition and prepares the reader to expect a divine deliverance of the contents of the ark. With situational irony, the daughter of Pharaoh paid wages to Moses' mother to nurse him (2:9). In juxtaposition to Pharaoh, the female characters in Exodus (the Hebrew midwives, Moses' mother and sister, and the daughter of Pharaoh) all appear to value human life. Her naming him "Moses" is a wordplay[44] and his deliverance of being drawn out from the water also foreshadows the Israelites' being "drawn out" of the waters of the Reed Sea during the Exodus.[45]

Upon growing up, Moses' "seeing" (ראה) his brothers' forced labor (2:11) will be compared with Yahweh "seeing" (ראה) the Israelites (2:25). Apparently aware of his role, Moses' attempt to deliver his brothers on his own human power (2:11–12) resulted in failure (2:13–15). Instead, deliverance would required a divine source (2:25).[46] The question posed to Moses, "Who appointed you as a commander and judge over us?" (2:14) is legitimate because Yahweh had not yet done so.[47] The rest of the narrative will show how Yahweh appointed Moses as judge and commander over the Israelites.

In Midian, Moses' living at הַבְּאֵר, "the well" (2:15) is significant because in Genesis, many important events happened at wells (Gen 16:14; 21:19–30; 24:11–20), including Jacob meeting one of his wives (Gen 29:2–10). That Moses "saved" (ישׁע) the daughters of Midian (2:17) paints him as a deliverer—this time successful—and foreshadows his future role as deliverer of Israel. His watering the flock of the seven daughters also points back to Jacob watering Rachel's flock (Gen 29:10) and foreshadows his marriage to Zipporah. Naming his son גֵּרְשֹׁם, "Gershom" is a double word play. First, it plays on the verb גרשׁ, "to drive out" used of him driving away the shepherds at the well (2:17). Second, it plays on the verb גור, "to sojourn" or "to dwell as an alien," related to his exile from Egypt.

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[42] Ultimately, this means they also believed in the promised seed of the woman.

[43] The lexical combination of the verb ראה with the adjective טוב is both frequent and important. It occurs in during creation week (Gen 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31) and also with the woman and the fruit (Gen 3:6), and later with the "sons of God" and the "daughters of men" (Gen 6:2).

[44] Paronomasia: מֹשֶׁה, "Moses," is a play of the verb משׁה, "to draw out," because he was drawn out of the water by Pharaoh's daughter.

[45] See NET note 35, Exodus 2:10.

[46] See NET note 40, Exodus 2:11 and note 1, Exodus 2:1.

[47] See NET note 45, Exodus 2:12.

That the king of Egypt's death did not relieve the Israelites' hard labor and groaning (2:23) demonstrates the nation's extreme need for deliverance—hinted at by the fact that God heard (2:24), saw (2:25),[48] and remembered his covenant (2:24).[49]

Moses' leading the flock of sheep to the mountain of God (3:1) foreshadows what he will do with the Israelites. Yahweh's repetition of "Moses, Moses" (3:4) indicates his selection of Moses as his instrument.[50] Yahweh's identification of himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob indicates his connection to the Israelites and implies he is the God who entered a covenant relationship with the patriarchs. That Yahweh called Israel עַמִּי, "my people" (3:7) is likewise important. Moses' Israelite audience could know that Yahweh was the God of their ancestors, and that by covenant relationship, they were Yahweh's people. Just as Moses was טוב "good" (2:2), so also the Promised Land was טוב (3:8). Yahweh's promise to deliver the Israelites into the Promised Land echoes the promise to Abraham in Genesis 15:19–21, thus demonstrating continuity of God, people, and promise.[51] The Israelite audience could recognize this and know that their going into the land, led by Yahweh, was all according to plan.

Moses' question, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and that I should bring the Israelites out from Egypt?" (3:11) echoes the question of the arguing Israelites, "Who appointed you as a commander and a judge over us?" (2:14). The question might also legitimately have been asked by Moses' audience—many of whom were born in the wilderness. It forms a pivotal question that addresses one of the primary reasons for Moses writing Exodus: to explain the central role of Moses as deliverer, prophet, and law-giver, in order that the Israelites and their subsequent generations would follow the laws he delivered to the nation. Yahweh's answer, "Because I will be with you" (3:12), and the sign of serving God on the mountain (3:12)[52] would validate Moses' authority as the one sent by God. The validation is repeated in 3:15, "So you must say to the Israelites, 'Yahweh, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me [Moses] to you." To the Israelite audience, the judgment on Egypt (3:20) and the Israelites' plunder of the nation (3:21–22) was already history. They could thus know that Yahweh had used Moses to accomplish these events, and therefore follow the law he delivered to them. The entire account in ch. 3 may be considered a "calling story."

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[48] Back in 2:11, Moses "saw" the forced labor of his brothers and acted, but with negative results. But now God "saw" the Israelites and would act accordingly.

[49] A reference to the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 15, 17) with its antecedent promises in Genesis 12–13. The remembering of the covenant in 2:24 likely refers most specifically to Genesis 15:13–16: "You must surely know that your descendants shall be as aliens in a land not their own. And they shall serve them and they shall oppress them four hundred years. And also the nation that they serve I will judge. Then afterward they shall go out with great possessions … And the fourth generation shall return here [Canaan]."

[50] See NET note 17, Exodus 3:4.

[51] In 3:8, the list of nations in the Promised Land includes Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites. In Genesis 15:19–21, the similar nations include Hittites, Perizzites, Amorites, Canaanites, and Jebusites, while the dissimilar nations include the Kenites, Kennizites, Kadmonites, Rephaim, and Girgashites.

[52] From the perspective of the audience, the "serving on the mountain" was already in the past. Thus, they could look back and see that act as a sign from God validating Moses as the one to lead the Israelites out of Egypt.

Yahweh's giving of miraculous signs to Moses (4:1–9) serve as another validation of Moses' authority. Moses' reluctance to the commission (4:10–14), while an act of disobedience that aroused the Lord's anger (4:14), actually further validates his claims of being chosen. While many men might jump at the opportunity to be someone important, Moses shrunk back from the responsibility. Yahweh's rhetorical questions in response to Moses' objections show further that Yahweh had chosen to work through him despite human weakness—real or imagined.[53]

Yahweh's promise, "I myself will be with your mouth, and I will teach you what you must speak" (4:12) would also indicate to the audience that Moses legitimately spoke for God. Furthermore, the selecting of Aaron as Moses' mouthpiece (4:14–16) would elevate Aaron as well.

Yahweh's identification of Israel as his firstborn son (4:22) is important to the story because it forms the basis for later situational irony and poetic justice. As Pharaoh had tried to wipe out Yahweh's "firstborn son," so Yahweh will take the firstborn sons of Egypt during the Passover (12:29–30). The attempt to drown the sons of Israel in the Nile would result in Pharaoh's drowning in the sea. But before Moses could serve Yahweh by delivering Israel, Yahweh's firstborn, he needed to release his own firstborn son through circumcision (4:23–26).[54,55]

That the Israelites believed the words of Moses and Aaron and they knelt down and worshiped Yahweh (4:31) shows the credibility of the two brothers to the Israelites in Egypt. For the second-generation audience of Exodus, they could know that the generation before them had believed in the words Yahweh through Moses and Aaron, and therefore that they should as well.

Literarily, the **contest between Yahweh and Pharaoh (5:1–11:10)** heightens the tension in the story as Yahweh—through Moses and Aaron—directly confronted Pharaoh, who functions as the serpent seed "ruler" (Gen 4:7). Ancient Egyptians also conceived of their king as a "god," so the contest is between the mighty arms and outstretched hands[56] of two persons who claim to be God—and of course, only one truly is. Yahweh indicated that he had raised Pharaoh up[57] so that his name and power would be proclaimed in all the earth (9:16). If Yahweh won the contest against "god" Pharaoh, and Pharaoh represented the leading world power, then Yahweh is truly most powerful. Since Yahweh had promised to curse those who curse Abraham and his

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[53] Ezekiel was the same way. In his call to the prophetic office (Ezek 1–3), the fact that he resisted Yahweh's commissioning as a prophet actually bolstered his case of being a legitimate prophet. See the present author's exposition of Ezekiel for more details.

[54] In 4:23, the first-person pronoun, "I," refers to Yahweh; and the third-person pronoun, "him" refers to Moses' firstborn son, Gershom. While many have taken 4:24–26 as a separate unit, its connection to 4:23 is unified. God threatened to kill Gershom because he was uncircumcised. Circumcision was a sign of hope in the promised seed, so Moses hadn't connected his son to the hope of the promise.

[55] Zipporah's circumcision of her son (4:24–26) then represents another time that women had saved Moses, along with the Hebrew midwives, his mother, his sister, and the daughter of Pharaoh.

[56] Certain ancient Egyptian reliefs picture Egyptian rulers in battle with both arms stretched out. One arm holds a weapon of warfare while the other holds the head of a smitten enemy. Perhaps the Israelites were familiar with such imagery. Yahweh's anthropomorphic promise, "I will redeem you with an outstretched arm," then, is likely a play on depictions of the Egyptian god-kings.

[57] That is, Egypt was one of the major superpowers of the Ancient Near East.

seed (Gen 12:3), the plagues on Egypt are talionic curses for their oppression and attempted androcide of the Israelites. In general, the plagues may be considered as Yahweh "striking" (נכה) Egypt for how they had treated Israel.[58] Moses employed the technique of interchange in his shifting of scenes between the plagued Egyptians and the untouched Israelites. This juxtaposition by contrast emphasizes the opposite identities of Egypt (serpent seed) and Israel (seed of the woman) because Yahweh judged the one while protecting the other.

"Knowing Yahweh" forms a major component of this literary unit (and beyond). Pharaoh's opening position was, "Who is Yahweh that I should listen to his voice to release Israel? I do not know Yahweh, and also I will not release Israel" (5:2). But the judgments on Pharaoh / Egypt occurred in order that he would come to know Yahweh. Indeed, Pharaoh's statement of not knowing Yahweh is answered during the drowning of the Egyptian army: "I will be glorified through Pharaoh and through all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am Yahweh" (14:4). Pharaoh and Egypt thus come to "know Yahweh" through judgment. Various aspects of this "knowledge" that appear in the contest include:

- Knowing Yahweh because of his judgments on Egypt and deliverance of Israel (7:5)
- Knowing Yahweh who can turn the Nile to blood (7:17)
- Knowing that there is no one like Yahweh (8:2 MT [8:6])
- Knowing that Yahweh is in the midst of Egypt (8:14 MT [8:18])
- Knowing that there is no god in all the earth like Yahweh (9:14)
- Knowing that the earth belongs to Yahweh (9:29)
- Knowing that Yahweh distinguishes between Egypt and Israel (11:7)
- Even Pharaoh's magicians would recognize the "finger of God" in the plagues (8:19)

Moses also intended that Israel come to know Yahweh, although for them it would be a knowledge discovered through deliverance rather than judgment. Whereas the patriarchs knew of Yahweh's promises, the Israelites would see their fulfillment (6:6) and come to know Yahweh as their God (6:7).[59] Indeed, Yahweh indicated he would harden Pharaoh's heart in order that "You will tell in the ears of your child and your grandchild that I dealt harshly with the Egyptians and so that you will tell about my signs that I have done among them, and so you will know that I am Yahweh" (10:2). Thus, Yahweh (and Moses) intended a multi-generational understanding of Yahweh and his relationship to Israel. The signs / plagues and the Exodus would form a basic understanding of these.[60]

Despite the capability of Pharaoh's magicians to mimic the signs of Moses and Aaron,[61] they recognized the "finger of God" when unable to bring out the gnats (8:19). With

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[58] נכה, "to strike," is used frequently in this section: Yahweh and Moses struck the Nile (7:17, 20, 25), Aaron struck the dust of the ground (8:16–17), hail struck everything in the fields (9:25, 31–32), and Yahweh struck the firstborn of Egypt (12:12–13, 29).

[59] See NET note 10, Exodus 6:6.

[60] Furthermore, the book of the covenant (chs. 20–23) opens by appealing to Yahweh's work in delivering Israel from Egypt, and forms the basis of why they should obey the covenant code. The book of Numbers will likewise appeal to Yahweh's deliverance of Israel from Egypt as a basis for obedience.

[61] For example, turning rods into serpents (7:12), turning water into blood (7:22), and bringing frogs over the land of Egypt (8:7).

situational irony, their magic arts added to Egypt's misery by replicating the signs, but were unable to reverse the plagues.[62] Similarly, Pharaoh's officials recognized that Egypt had been ruined long before he did (10:7). Pharaoh was certainly on the losing side of the contest up to ch. 11, but the ultimate outcome was decisive in the Reed Sea.

A further important aspect of this literary unit is the fact that Yahweh "distinguished" between Israel and Egypt (8:18 MT [8:22]; 9:4; 11:7). This distinction is preparatory for Yahweh's identification of Israel as his סְגֻלָּה, "treasured possession" (19:5), and would indicate to Moses' audience, and future generations of Israelites, the fact that they had a special role in God's program.

This section also highlights Moses and Aaron as Yahweh's genuine representatives and establishes their leading positions for the upcoming flight from Egypt. The genealogical record (6:14–27) functions to situate Moses and Aaron within the Levites of Israel, so proving their ancestry and establishing the foundation for the future Levitical priesthood. The genealogy and the enactment of signs / plagues thus contribute to Moses' ethical rhetoric in establishing himself and Aaron as the leaders of Israel (*ethos*). That being the case, the conquest generation and future generations should obey the Law delivered by Moses.[63]

In **the Passover and Exodus (12:1–15:21)**, Moses paired on the one hand, the historical / literary events of the Passover, and on the other, instructions for his audience and all future generations of Israel. The Passover and Exodus events serve as the foundational reason why the Israelites should celebrate the feast of unleavened bread and the Passover feast. In this section, then, Moses combined narrative and direct instruction for his audience. The narrative emphasized the Israelites' obedience to Moses. Since that first generation obeyed, so also every subsequent generation should obey Moses.

That "Yahweh said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt" (12:1) highlights Moses and Aaron as the conduits of divine revelation and serves the purposes of Moses' ethical rhetoric (*ethos*). The subsequent lengthy set of instructions regarding the calendar, the Passover sacrifice, and the Passover meal (12:2–20, 43–49) was intended for the whole community of Israel (12:3) as a memorial and lasting statute (12:14) for all generations (12:14, 17, 24; 13:8–10), even upon entry into the Promised Land (12:25; 13:5). Moses specifically intended his audience to pass the feast on to their children (12:24, 26; 13:14) to memorialize God's deliverance in the Exodus to honor him forever (12:42; 13:16). The Passover also explains why firstborn Israelite males were to be consecrated, קַדֵּשׁ (13:2, 12–15):[64] because Yahweh spared the firstborn Israelites in the Passover, Moses wanted all subsequent firstborn males to be dedicated to the Lord's service as a way of commemorating the Passover.[65] Moses' note in the narrative that "all the Israelites did as

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[62] See NET note 11, Exodus 8:7.

[63] That Moses came from the tribe of Levi indicated he was not in the line of promise, which must go through Judah (Gen 49:8–12). While he will function as the deliverer of Israel, he was not the Promised Seed, nor a carrier of that line.

[64] In the Piel stem, the verb קדשׁ means, to "transfer something to the state of holiness" or to "dedicate for use before God" (*HALOT*, s.v. קדשׁ). In the case of firstborn males in Israel, they were dedicated to God.

[65] In Genesis 3:21, Yahweh slaughtered an animal—most likely a lamb—to provide coverings for Adam and Eve. Here in Exodus 12, the blood of the Passover lamb which protected the Israelites from judgment is

Yahweh had commanded Moses and Aaron" (12:50) has the purpose of inciting obedience to the Passover among Moses' readers.

Literarily, the striking down of the firstborn of Egypt (12:29–30) is a turning point in the narrative because Pharaoh released Israel (12:31). The deaths of Egyptian firstborns is situational irony because Egypt had sought to kill Yahweh's firstborn, Israel (4:22), and is an outworking of the promise for reciprocal cursing in Genesis 12:3. It is also an example of poetic justice. The plunder of the Egyptians (12:35–36) and the 430 years of Israelite presence in Egypt are outworkings of Yahweh's promise in Genesis 15:13–14. By mention of (1) Moses carrying out Joseph's bones, and (2) Joseph's prophecy of God visiting (פקד) the Israelites (13:19; Gen 50:24),[66] Moses connected for his audience the idea that the sojourn in, and departure from, Egypt was exactly according to Yahweh's plan.

The final encounter between Yahweh and Pharaoh (14:1–31) contains the climax of the narrative in Exodus. Plot tension reaches its peak as the Israelites were trapped between the sea and Pharaoh's army. This situation elevates suspense in the narrative. Since the contest between Yahweh and Pharaoh (5:1–11:10) centered on the idea that Pharaoh did not know Yahweh and therefore would not release Israel (5:2), the destruction of Pharaoh and his army in the sea (14:28–30) would result in Egypt knowing Yahweh. Yahweh's declaration that he would be glorified through Pharaoh and his army (14:4)—that is, in their defeat—indicates this. Indeed, when the chariot wheels jammed and the Egyptians were thrown into confusion (14:24–25), the Egyptians *knew* Yahweh through judgment.[67] With situational irony, only after the destruction of Egypt and the destruction of his army and just prior to his death did Pharaoh come to know Yahweh. Pharaoh's death and the destruction of his nation and his army is an example of poetic justice and an outworking of Genesis 12:3. Pharaoh's attempt to drown the sons of Israel fell back on him while he and his army drowned in the Reed Sea.

With Yahweh's sending of a strong east wind, רוּחַ, and the division of waters (14:21), Moses employed literary repetition as these words would take the reader back to Genesis 1 where the Spirit (רוּחַ) of God hovered over the chaotic waters of creation and divided the waters (Gen 1:6) and created dry land (Gen 1:10). The motif also connects to Genesis 8:1 when Yahweh sent a wind (also רוּחַ) to clear the flood waters. That the Israelites further walked on "dry ground"[68] that arose through the waters is a repetition of the dry ground arising out of the primordial waters of Genesis 1, which suggests a new beginning for the chosen people of Yahweh.[69] The same motif will appear when the Israelites cross the Jordan into Canaan (Josh 3).

With all the Egyptian army drowned, Moses' final statement of the Israelites' fear of Yahweh and trust in Moses (14:31) serve as a concluding reminder to the audience that they should also fear Yahweh for what he had done, and trust in Moses and the Law they had received

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the second such example of a lamb's blood protecting from judgment. Canonically, these types foreshadow "The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

[66] The quotation in 13:19 of Joseph's prophecy (and request regarding his bones) is identical to Genesis 50:25.

[67] They proclaimed, "Yahweh is fighting for them against Egypt" (14:25).

[68] Genesis 1:6 and Exodus 14:22 use the Hebrew word יַבָּשָׁה for "dry ground." Exodus 14:21 uses the Hebrew word חָרָבָה.

[69] Schnittjer, *Torah Story*, 46–47.

through his mediation. Thus, even the wording of the narrative serves Moses' ethical rhetoric (*ethos*) for his deliberative purpose (live in faithfulness to the Law which he delivered).

With the antagonist (Pharaoh / Egypt) now defeated, the primary tension in the narrative is resolved. The crossing of the sea also foreshadows the crossing of the Jordan River in the book of Joshua. These two crossings on dry land through bodies of water form an inclusio around the Israelites' wilderness wanderings.[70]

The songs of Moses and Miriam (15:1–21) serve as musical commemorations of the Exodus and forms a poetic janus because it functions as a critical hinge that both looks both back and ahead in the story. As demonstrated in Table 3 below, all the major sections of the Torah contain poetry at or near their conclusions:

Table 3: Poetic conclusions to the major sections of the Torah[71]

Major Section	Poetic Conclusion
Beginning (Gen 1–50)	Last words of Israel (Gen 49)
Exodus from Egypt (Exod 1–14)	Song of the Sea (Exod 15)
Wilderness travels (Exod 15–Num 21)	Oracles of Balaam (Num 22–24)
Preparations for the land (Num 26–Deut 34)	Song of Moses (Deut 32)

The songs of Moses and Miriam employ juxtaposition by contrast: "Liquid and solid, down and up, trembling and unmovable, death and life. Pharaoh's army is thrown into the sea and sinks like lead. Israel will be led up to God's mountain, his dwelling and sanctuary. The nations will hear and will tremble, but Israel, the object of God's unfailing love, will not be moved."[72] Moses also employed poetic license in using figurative, non-literal language.[73] No doubt the Israelites memorized and sang these songs during the wilderness wanderings. By recording the words of the songs, Moses intended each generation to teach the songs to the next. Thus, future generations would have both festal and musical celebrations of what Yahweh had done in the Exodus, so providing reasons to commemorate the Passover which Moses led and obey the Law which he delivered to the nation.

In an extended historical narrative section on **the leader of Israel (15:22–18:27)**, Moses further serves his ethical purpose of establishing himself as the leader and lawgiver of Israel, thus providing his audience more reasons to obey the Law which he delivered.

With the tension of Egypt removed from the story, a new tension between Moses (with Aaron) and the people comes to the forefront. This had begun back when the arguing Israelite asked, "Who appointed you as a commander and a judge over us?" (2:14) and continued after Pharaoh refused straw and the Israelites complained against Moses (5:20–21). Here, the tension between Moses and the people reached new heights as the people grumbled multiple

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[70] Schnittjer, *Torah Story*, 201.

[71] Adapted from Schnittjer, *Torah Story*, 147.

[72] Schnittjer, *Torah Story*, 200.

[73] For example, Yahweh did not "literally" hurl the Egyptian horses and riders into the sea.

times against Moses.[74] This section reveals several important points regarding the tension between Moses and the Israelites. First, that Yahweh would test Israel and promise blessing for obedience to the statutes delivered through Moses (15:25–26). Second, that resistance to Moses is actually resistance to Yahweh (16:8). Third, that disobedience is ultimately useless (16:20).[75] Fourth, that provision of bread (16:15, 21), meat (16:11–13), water (15:25; 17:1–7), and physical protection from enemies (17:8–16) all come through obedience to Moses. Fifth, that disobedience to the Sabbath rest (16:27) was useless and resulted in God's displeasure (16:28). By showing the blessings for obedience and the futility of disobedience, all of these points contribute to the overall deliberative purpose of Exodus that the audience would live in obedience to the Law delivered by Moses. The juxtaposition by contrast between the Israelites' continual unfaithfulness and Yahweh's continual gracious provision function to induce the audience's criticism of the Israelites (epideictic rhetoric of blame),[76] and therefore to elicit the opposite response: obedience to Moses.

In a case of situational irony, Yahweh's command to write down Moses' victory over the Amalekites as a memorial in fact recorded that the memory of the Amalekites would be blotted out forever (17:14). The mention of the scroll for Joshua about blotting out Amalek (17:14) and the altar (17:15–16)[77] function to remind the audience—who would go into the Promised Land under Joshua's leadership—of their upcoming role in destroying the Amalekites. Since (1) Joshua had already defeated them once under Yahweh's power (17:13), and (2) Yahweh would be continually at war with Amalek (17:16), then the Israelites could be certain of their victory against the Amalekites when they entered the Promised Land.

Moses employed narrative time with the out of chronological sequence visit of Jethro (18:1–27),[78] and the unit serves several functions. First, it shows how even someone outside the Abrahamic covenant could recognize, in response to all that Yahweh had done, "Now I know that Yahweh is greater than all the gods" (18:11). This is an argument from lesser to greater: if a foreigner from outside the covenant could recognize this, how much more should the Israelite audience, as heirs to the promise? Second, it shows Jethro's recognition of the reciprocal blessing and cursing promised to Abraham and his seed (Gen 12:3). Jethro noted, "he [Yahweh] did this to those who had treated Israel arrogantly" (18:11, NIV). In another lesser to greater argument, if even a Gentile could recognize the outworking of God's promise (Gen 12:3), then how much more the heirs of that promise? Because of Yahweh's proven faithfulness in the past, the Israelite audience could thus be assured of victory when combatting serpent seed nations in

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[74] The verb לון means, "to murmur against" (*HALOT,* s.v. לון). The word occurs ten times in the Hebrew Bible, with all ten occurrences in Exodus 15–17 (15:24; 16:2, 7, 8, 9, 12; 17:3). The word has stronger connotations than merely "complaining" or "murmuring," however. Rather, its use in these chapters suggests rebellious hearts that questioned God's abilities and motives (NET note 66, Exodus 15:24).

[75] Gathering more manna than the Lord allowed only led to its spoiling.

[76] Schnittjer, *Torah Story*, 206.

[77] Specifically, "a war will be for Yahweh with Amalek from generation *to* generation" (17:16).

[78] This is apparent because Jethro visited once the Israelites were encamped at Sinai (18:5), but the Israelites only reached Sinai in 19:1. Two possibilities for this use of narrative time are (1) Moses' appointment of judges to judge according to the Law (18:16, 20) demonstrates the need *for* a law delivered beginning in ch. 20, and (2) the two visits of Moses' father-in-law (Exod 18; Num 10) bracket the entire encampment at Sinai. See Schnittjer, *Torah Story*, 108.

the Promised Land. Third, Jethro's instruction that Moses serve as representative of the people before God (18:19) establishes the place of Moses. That Moses would "Teach them [the Israelites] his [Yahweh's] decrees and instructions, and show them the way they are to live and how they are to behave" (18:20, NIV) points to the Law delivered by Moses as the right way for Israelites to live. This directly connects his ethical purposes of highlighting why the audience should listen to Moses (*ethos*), and also to the overall deliberative purpose that the Israelites would live faithfully in accordance with the Law.

Israel at Sinai (19:1–24:14) contains significant amounts of legal code within a narrative framework, and Moses used this section for two major purposes.

The first major purpose was to establish Moses as the one, unique individual who (1) had special access to Yahweh, and (2) delivered the Law to Israel. This section contributes significantly to Moses' ethical rhetoric because it highlights the close relationship he had with Yahweh, and continually distinguished between Moses and the rest of the people (see bullet-list below). Second, to establish the twelve tribes as a unified nation in a covenant relationship with Yahweh, which had as its basis the legal code described in the text as, "the scroll of the covenant" (24:7). By adhering to this covenant code, the nation would prove itself a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. As to this first major purpose, Moses continually distinguished himself in the narrative in multiple ways. Specifically, Moses:

- met Yahweh on the mountain alone (19:3, 8, 20; 24:12, 15, 18)[79]
- met Yahweh on the mountain with only the priests and elders (24:1)
    - but even here, Moses approached Yahweh while the rest worshiped at a distance (24:1–2), and emphasized how the people must not go up with Moses (24:2)
- met with Yahweh on the mountain with priests and elders (24:9)
- spoke to the people the words of Yahweh (19:7, 14, 25; 24:3, 7)
- reported the words of the people to Yahweh (19:8)
- distinguished himself as closer to Yahweh than even the priests (19:22)
- distinguished himself from the priests and the people (19:24)
- highlighted how the people only wanted to hear God through Moses (20:19)
- contrasted the "distance" of the people from God with his own ability to approach God (20:18, 21; 24:1–2)
- served as covenant mediator by sprinkling blood on the people (24:8)

Yahweh also emphasized that he would speak to Moses in a dense cloud "in order that the people will hear when I speak with you and will also trust in you forever" (19:9). Thus, the narrative repeatedly demonstrated the uniqueness of Moses as the mediator between God and the people. This was revealed (1) by his physical proximity to Yahweh as contrasted with the distance of everyone else, and (2) the fact that he spoke for Yahweh to the people, and spoke for the people to Yahweh.

[79] In Exodus 24:12, Joshua accompanied Moses as an assistant.

The impressive visual and aural manifestations of Yahweh[80] and the intense danger[81] function to communicate the reality of Yahweh's presence: Moses truly did receive these words from the Almighty. For Moses' Israelite audience—and future generations—all of these elements would function to identify Moses as the mediator and lawgiver who should be trusted and obeyed because he legitimately spoke for God.

As to the second major purpose, the narrative establishes how (1) the twelve tribes became a unified nation, and (2) the Law bound the nation in a covenant relationship with Yahweh. This blood-ratified relationship (24:8) is what made Israel Yahweh's treasured possession, a kingdom of priests,[82] and a holy nation (19:5–6). In the legal code of this section, the audience of Moses would know the requirements for holy living under Yahweh their God. The status of the nation as a kingdom of priests hails back to the Abrahamic Covenant and the promise of being a blessing to all the families of the earth (Genesis 12:2–3), and also the promise that "I will make you a nation, and kings shall go out from you" (Gen 17:6). Israel's calling as a kingdom of priests explains *how* the promise to Abraham that his seed would be a blessing to all nations of the earth would occur. They would function as priestly mediators of Yahweh's blessing to the Gentiles. The first part of that promise (becoming a nation) occurs in Exodus 19–24 when the people agreed to the terms of the covenant (24:3) and accepted its ratification by blood (24:8). The enthusiastic responses of the people (19:8; 24:3, 7) serve to offer a positive paradigm (model) for Moses' audience. They needed to recognize their status as the holy nation and the requirements of Yahweh to be a holy nation. Furthermore, a section on God's promises for establishing the nation in the land of Canaan (23:20–33) would speak directly to Moses' audience by promising angelic guidance and protection,[83] defeat of the land's current inhabitants,[84] and the establishment of extensive borders for the land of Israel.[85] The audience could therefore understand that part of being a nation in covenant with Yahweh meant their possession of the Promised Land, and that they could boldly proceed into Canaan with assured victory. The warnings against idolatry in this section (23:24, 33) speak to the requirement for their covenant fidelity.

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[80] A dense cloud (19:9, 16; 24:15–16, 18), a ram's horn (19:13), thunder and lightning (19:16), a loud trumpet blast (19:16, 19), smoke and fire (19:18), the mountain-quake (19:18), the glory of Yahweh appearing as a consuming fire (24:17).

[81] The threat of death (19:12–13) and the fearful response of the people (19:16).

[82] Kaiser offers four suggestions for the relationship between the two nouns מַמְלֶכֶת כֹּהֲנִים. First, an appositional relationship: "kings, that is, priests." Second, an attributive genitive: "royal priesthood." Third, an attributed genitive, "priestly kingdom." Fourth, two nouns with an unexpressed 'and:' "kings and priests." Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., "Exodus," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers*, edited by Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990), 417.

[83] This angel would go ahead of the Israelites, guard them on the way, and bring them into the Promised Land (23:20, 23). The Israelites were instructed to obey and not rebel against this angel (23:21–22).

[84] The angel would wipe out the enemies (23:23), and God's terror would come upon the inhabitants of Canaan (23:27) and drive them out (23:28–30).

[85] From the Reed Sea to the Euphrates River (23:31). This promise hails back to the land promise in the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 15:18–21).

The narrative of Yahweh delivering to Moses the **cultic instructions (24:15–31:18)** while on the mountain for forty days furthers his ethical rhetoric (*ethos*). The section demonstrates that all of the instructions for religious paraphernalia and the Aaronic priesthood were divinely ordained, and, that they came to Israel through Moses. The purpose of the instructions were so that (1) the nation could construct the required religious and priestly implements, (2) Aaron and his sons would know how to be ordained into the priesthood, and (3) so that the Israel would recognize the legitimacy of the Aaronic priesthood. The speech of Yahweh in chs. 25–31 occurred while Moses was on the mountain for forty days (24:18).

By the time Moses wrote Exodus, the instructions Yahweh gave for the religious and priestly implements[86] had already been fulfilled. The audience could therefore look back to the obedience of their ancestors and recognize the repeated refrain about how these would operate for generations to come (27:21; 29:42; 30:8, 10, 21, 31; 31:16).[87] Thus, they could know of the ongoing legitimacy of the Aaronic priesthood and the tools and implements of that priesthood.[88] This serves Moses' ethical rhetoric for himself and Aaron. The audience could also recognize the need to keep the Sabbath as a sign of the covenant relationship between Israel and Yahweh (31:13), mediated by Moses. This section thus pointed to Moses as the one to deliver the cultic instructions for the priesthood, so bolstering his status as the Lawgiver and further rational for why the audience should obey the Law Yahweh gave Israel through Moses.

In the account of **the golden calf (32:1–35)**, Moses revealed the awful penalty for deviating from the Law of Yahweh delivered by Moses. Moses knew he would die before leading the people into the Promised Land, and he probably had concern that in his absence, the audience might wander from Yahweh and his laws—just as the Israelites had at the base of Sinai. If not even forty days passed before idolatry began, how much worse the months and years after Moses' death? The slaughter by the Levites (32:26–29) and the plague (32:35)[89] were justified punishments for the idolatry,[90] and the Israelites here serve as a censurable example to Moses' audience.[91] He thus employed epideictic rhetoric in casting them as blameworthy, and intended

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[86] The ark (25:10–22), the table (25:23–30), the lampstand (25:31–40), the tabernacle (26:1–37), the altar of burnt offering (27:1–8), the courtyard (27:9–19), the oil (27:20–21), the priestly garments (28:1–43) and their consecration (29:1–46), the altar of incense (30:1–10), the atonement money (30:11–16), the washbasin (30:17–21), the anointing oil (30:22–33), and the incense (30:34–38).

[87] These refrains perpetuate the instructions as, for example, "a lasting statute throughout their generations" (27:21).

[88] For example, that a priestly decision using the Urim and Thummim would always bear the authority of Yahweh.

[89] Yahweh had promised that if the Israelites worshiped him alone, he would protect them from sickness (23:25). Since they disobeyed, the plague came (32:35).

[90] The first two commands expressly forbade worshiping other gods or creating images of gods (20:2–6). The Israelites' cry that the golden calf is the god who brought them out of Egypt (32:4) also directly contradicts the statement, "I am Yahweh, your God, who brought you out from the land of Egypt" (20:2).

[91] Moses' grinding of the idol into dust and making the people drink from the stream (32:20; see also Deut 9:21) form a type of the bitter water trial by ordeal for a wife suspected of unfaithfulness (Num 5:12–31). Presumably, those guilty would manifest a visible sign that allowed the Levites to identify who to kill (see NET note 49, Exodus 32:20).

his audience to avoid such idolatry on account of the terrible consequences. He also made effective use of narrative space to present a juxtaposition by contrast between the glory at the top of the mountain and the idolatry occurring at the base of the mountain. Lastly, his role in proclaiming the execution of the idolaters demonstrates Moses' role as judge, pointing back to the question, "Who appointed you … a judge over us?" (2:14). Yahweh did the appointing, and now Moses demonstrated his role as judge, thus serving his ethical purposes (*ethos*).

This section also closely associates Moses with Yahweh. The Israelites erroneously thought that Moses' absence (32:1) also meant the absence of Yahweh, hence the temptation to go after other gods. Moses' emphasis that the tablets were "the work of God" and "the writing of God" (32:16) shows the Law truly came from Yahweh, and the fact that he carried the tablets "in his hand" (32:15) places Moses as the mediator of Yahweh's Law, so serving Moses' ethical rhetoric (*ethos*). Furthermore, Moses' plea not to destroy the Israelites (32:11–13) portrayed him as the intercessor between Yahweh and the people.[92] It is also situational irony because the Israelites had previously feared that Yahweh brought them to the desert to kill them (16:3), and now they faced that very real possibility. Moses intended his audience to further recognize their need to be "under Moses," as it were, through covenant faithfulness to the Law which he delivered. Indeed, Moses had even appealed to Yahweh's covenant with the patriarchs in his intercession (32:13). The audience could thus know that Yahweh takes faithfulness to his covenants seriously, and so should they (24:3, 7).[93]

Despite Aaron's idol-casting (32:4), holding of a festival not ordained by Yahweh (32:5),[94] and bold-faced lying to Moses (32:24), the obedience of "all the Levites" resulted in their ordination and blessing (32:26).[95] The singing Moses heard to the "god" who brought them out of Egypt (32:18) is a parody of the song of Moses (15:1–19).[96] Their dancing / revelry (32:6) is likewise a juxtaposition by comparison to the previous dancing in ch. 15. The former was out of gratitude and worship, the latter out of idolatrous sexual revelry.[97] While Yahweh was angry enough with Aaron to destroy him (Deut 9:20), Moses' intercession saved Aaron as well. The audience could thus be assured of Aaron and the Levites' role as priests in Israel. As demonstrated in the narrative, they would maintain order in the household of God, even to the extreme of killing.[98]

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[92] Yahweh's promise to make Moses into a great nation alludes to the Abrahamic Covenant, and by doing that, he left the door open for Moses to intercede on behalf of the people (see NET note 29, Exodus 32:10).

[93] "All the words that Yahweh has spoken we will do" (24:3); "All that Yahweh has spoken we will do, and we will listen" (24:7).

[94] Three feasts per year had already been prescribed: the feast of unleavened bread, the feast of harvest, and the feast of harvest gathering (23:14–17). What Aaron proposed was outside of Yahweh's commands for feasts, and thus unauthorized.

[95] That the Levites were "ordained" (so LEB) or "set apart" (so NIV) or "dedicated" (so NASB) comes from the expression מִלְאוּ יֶדְכֶם, literally "fill your hands." This expression pertains to being commissioned for and devoted to a particular task (see NET note 62, Exodus 32:29). Also used of commissioning / ordination in 28:41; 29:9, 29, 33, 35.

[96] Peter Enns, *Exodus*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 573.

[97] Schnittjer, *Torah Story*, 234.

[98] Enns, *Exodus*, 576.

Following the golden calf incident, Moses' record of **leaving Sinai (33:1–35:3)** introduces a tension in the narrative whereby Yahweh will not go with the Israelites to the Promised Land (33:3–5) on account of his anger, but instead will send an angel before them (33:1–2). The central place of Moses at the tent of assembly (33:7–11) serves Moses' ethical rhetoric by establishing Moses as the center of the peoples' attention (33:8, 10), and the one who spoke from the people to God (33:7) and from God to the people (33:9). That Yahweh spoke to Moses face to face (33:11) also highlighted Moses' unique position. The narrative tension[99] is resolved (33:14; also 34:8–10) precisely because of Moses' favor in the sight of Yahweh (33:12–13). The audience would know Yahweh had been with them all the years of wilderness wandering, and here Moses claims that was so because Yahweh had been pleased with him (33:12–13). The question, "How will anyone know that you are pleased with me?" (33:16, NIV) is a valid question the audience and future generations of Israelites might wonder. Proof came in several ways. First, Yahweh going with the Israelites in the wilderness (33:14, 17). Second, Yahweh revealed his glory to Moses (33:18–23). Third, the covenant renewal (34:1–35:3; especially 34:10) revealed Yahweh as a God of רכם, חן, חסד, and אמת (34:6)[100] with whom Moses alone could meet (34:3), along with the covenant obligations of Israel (34:11–35:3). These covenant obligations are a selective subset of those already presented in the book of the covenant (chs. 20–23), and they would reiterate for Moses' Israelite audience the things necessary for obedience once in the Promised Land. Lastly, the radiance of Moses' face (34:29–35) also identified the special position of Moses. The distinction between Moses and the people—including Aaron—is again apparent in their fear of him (34:30).

Thus, Moses continued in this section to establish himself as the authorized mediator and lawgiver between Yahweh and the people of Israel , so contributing to his ethical rhetoric (*ethos*) as to why his audience and future generations of Israelites should follow the Law he delivered.

In **building the tabernacle (35:4–40:38)**,[101] Moses portrayed the cultic instructions previously delivered to himself on the mountain (24:15–31:18) being carried out[102] as the tabernacle, priestly vestments, and all the cultic implements were crafted by the Israelites. That God's Spirit (רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים) filled the craftsmen (35:21) is a repetition of creation (Gen 1) and evokes creation imagery, suggesting a new beginning for Israel, and especially as he filled the tabernacle with his glory (40:35).[103] Moses emphasized some twenty-four times in this section that

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[99] Introduced in 33:3–5.

[100] These characteristics are fundamental to the very heart of Yahweh. Appeals to, and mentions of, these characteristics pervade the Scriptures.

[101] Moses employed two terms for the structure: (1) the tent of assembly, אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד, and (2) the tabernacle, הַמִּשְׁכָּן. These two terms are used synonymously in 40:34. "The term tabernacle denotes its function as the dwelling place of God's glory, while tent of meeting signifies it as the place of the revelatory conferences God held with Moses" (Schnittjer, *Torah Story*, 166).

[102] An excellent summarizing verse of this section is, "So all the work on the tabernacle, the tent of meeting, was completed. The Israelites did everything just as the LORD commanded Moses" (39:32, NIV).

[103] Schnittjer, *Torah Story*, 242.

everything was carried out according to the commands of Yahweh through Moses (e.g., 35:29).[104] This repeated emphasis would communicate to Moses' audience that the cultic system they followed was genuinely from Yahweh, and that Moses was the intermediary who delivered the plans to Israel.[105] It also functions as a juxtaposition by contrast to the account of the golden calf (32:1–35): whereas Aaron and the people had attempted to worship Yahweh on their own terms, here with the tabernacle Moses obeyed every detail precisely. Furthermore, that both the cultic implements (40:9–11) and the priests (40:12–15) were anointed and consecrated for service would communicate to Moses' audience their legitimacy. The mention that Aaron's offspring would serve as a continual priesthood throughout the generations of Israel (40:15) further establishes the Levites as the priests of Israel.

The plans for the tabernacle include numerous correspondences to the Garden of Eden. Table 4 below identifies these elements.

Table 4: Corresponding elements of the Garden of Eden and the tabernacle

Garden of Eden	Tabernacle
God dwelt with humanity in the garden (Gen 2:8–9; 3:8)	Tabernacle a sanctuary for Yahweh to dwell in the midst of Israel (25:8; 29:45–46; 40:34–38)
Adam commissioned to serve (עבד) and keep the garden (2:15)	Israelites commissioned to the service (עבד) of the tabernacle (35:21, 24; 36:1, 3, 5)
Cherubim guarding access to the sacred space (Gen 3:24)	Cherubim guarding the ark (25:18–20)
Humanity driven away from the garden / God's presence from west to east (Gen 3:24)	Divine presence approached from east to west (27:13–16; 38:13–15)
Tree of life (Gen 2:9)	Lampstand in the tabernacle with a tree-like description (branch, buds blossoms, flowers) (25:31–26)
Presence of gold and precious stones (Gen 2:11–12)	Extensive use of gold and other precious stones in the tabernacle and priestly vestiture (25:3–7; 26:29; 28:9–36)
Life in Yahweh's presence contingent upon obedience (Gen 2:16–17; 3:19)	Life in Yahweh's presence contingent upon cultic obedience (29:38–46)

As demonstrated above in Table 4, the tabernacle contained numerous elements corresponding to the Garden of Eden, suggesting Yahweh's plan to restore humanity to his presence through the holy nation of Israel, the kingdom of priests. Yet despite the overwhelming rhetorical purpose of Exodus to bolster the unique mediatorial role of Moses, when Yahweh's glory filled the tabernacle (40:33), *even Moses* was unable to enter the sacred space (40:34). This suggests that despite Moses' status as an archetypal mediator, he would not be the one who could restore humanity to the garden. Instead, the nation, and indeed all humanity, would need to wait for another prophet / judge / leader / mediator / intercessor. This anticipates Moses' later declaration that a prophet like himself would arise from within Israel (Deut 18:18).

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[104] Other instances of this refrain, "according to all that Yahweh had commanded Moses" (or near variants in wording) include Exodus 35:4, 10; 36:1, 5; 38:22; 39:1, 5, 7, 21, 26, 29, 31, 32, 42, 43; 40:16, 19, 21, 23, 25, 27, 29, 32.

[105] "Moses inspected the work and saw that they had done it just as the LORD had commanded. So Moses blessed them" (39:43).

Near the conclusion of the book, the statement, “And so Moses finished the work” (40:33) delivers some finality to the establishment of Israel as a nation. At the beginning of Exodus, a group of twelve tribes had been enslaved in Egypt. But now, by Yahweh using Moses, those tribes had become a unified nation—intended to be a kingdom of priests—with a legal code and an established priesthood and cultic implements, on their way to the Promised Land. Moses’ second generation Israelite audience, as well as future generations of Israelites, could rest assured in the legitimacy of the legal and religious tradition established by Moses because it truly came from Yahweh. Because of the book of Exodus, they could know be assured of Moses’ legitimate function as prophet, judge, and mediator. Through the laws he wrote in Exodus—as well as in Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy—the Israelites could know how to live faithfully to the covenant and function as a holy nation and kingdom of priests in the Promised Land while they awaited the promised one (Gen 3:15) to the garden.

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