

Exodus 1-6

1. From Genesis to Exodus

a. Progression and Development

- **Israel:** When Israel descends into Egypt, it is described as a family; in Egypt, it is depicted as an ethnic group (“Hebrews”) descended from Jacob/Israel (“children of Israel”); Exodus tells the story of how it leaves Egypt as a nation.
- **Divine activity:** Gen 1-10 focuses on God as Creator of entire cosmos and Judge of all of its people → Gen 12-50 on God as covenantal partner to a single family → Exodus depicts God as covenantal partner to a whole nation and as the force shaping history on the world stage
- **Ancestors:** Abraham as father of the Jews → Jacob as eponymous ancestor of Israel → Moses as nation-founder and law-giver, with his brother Aaron as head of the line of priests
- **Covenant:** Abraham → a single line from Abraham, through Isaac to Jacob → all of the sons of Jacob/Israel → the people Israel as a whole, whom God delivers from Egypt and to whom He appears at Mt. Sinai

b. Continuities between Genesis and Exodus 1-6

- Joseph story (Gen 36-50) serves as preface to Exodus, as the beginning of story of Israel’s sojourn in Egypt, first as favored visitors but later, with the passing of generations and the rise of a new king who “did not know Joseph,” as slaves.
- Exodus begins with “the names of the sons of Israel who came to Egypt with Jacob” (1:1)
- Abrahamic promise of progeny fulfilled (1:7 - “the children of Israel were fruitful and prolific; they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land was filled with them”)—albeit with negative results: the multiplication of Israelites leads to Egyptian oppression of them.
- Reversals (as in Joseph story): oppression leads to further multiplication
- Endangerment of male children of Hebrews (cf. Isaac); special role of women (in this case midwives) in furthering God’s plan for his chosen (cf. Sarah; Rebekah). Note also endangerment of all of Israel, here depicted as God’s son: “Israel is my firstborn son” (Ex 4:22).
- Moses’ early life (Ex 2:1-22) resonates with Genesis as well: he is endangered as a child and saved miraculously (cf. Isaac) – from water (cf. Noah); he is then forced into exile but there meets his wife (cf. Jacob).
- Continuity of covenantal promises asserted explicitly: God is depicted as acting on behalf of the Hebrews *because* of the covenant: “The Israelites groaned under their slavery... God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” (Ex 2:23-24).

3. Theophany and commission of Moses (Exodus 3-6)

a. Revelation of divine Name

First use of the tetragrammaton in J, E, and P, according to the Documentary Hypothesis		
J	Gen 4:26	To Seth also a son was born, and he called his name Enosh. At that time men began to call upon the name of the LORD .
E	Ex 3:13-15	But Moses said to God, "If I come to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" God also said to Moses, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'The LORD , the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you': this is my name for ever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.
P	Ex 6:2-3	And God said to Moses, "I am the LORD . I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by my name the LORD I did not make myself known to them. I also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they resided as aliens. I have also heard the groaning of the Israelites whom the Egyptians are holding as slaves, and I have remembered my covenant

One of the main concepts of the Documentary Hypothesis (see Friedman, pp. 81ff) is that E and P use **Elohim** and other names for God when describing the Primeval and Patriarchal period and reserve the tetragrammaton (YHWH) for the theophany to Moses (E: Ex 3; P: Ex 6) in order to mark the significance of Moses and the Exodus for the special relationship between God and Israel and to mark the Sinaitic covenant; J, by contrast uses YHWH as God's name from the time of Seth, consistent with its focus on the patriarchs and the Abrahamic covenant.

b. First theophany to Moses (Story of Burning Bush = E)

c. Moses as reluctant messenger

	<i>Point of uncertainty</i>	<i>Divine response</i>
3:11ff:	""Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"	Commitment and promise: "I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain."
3:13ff:	"If I come to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?"	Revelation of tetragrammaton (YHWH)
4:1ff	"But suppose they do not believe me or listen to me, but say, 'The LORD did not appear to you.?"	Ability to work wonders with staff "so that they may believe that the LORD, the God of their ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you."
4:10ff	"O my Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor even now that you have spoken to your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue."	Assertion of absolute power: "Who gives speech to mortals? Who makes them mute or deaf, seeing or blind? Is it not I, the LORD? Now go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you are to speak."
	But he said, "O my Lord, please send someone else."	Anger and compromise: Then the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses and he said, "What of your brother Aaron the Levite? I know that he can speak fluently; even now he is coming out to meet you, and when he sees you his heart will be glad. You shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth; and I will be with your mouth and with his mouth, and will teach you what you shall do. He indeed shall speak for you to the people; he shall serve as a mouth for you, and you shall serve as God for him. Take in your hand this staff, with which you shall perform the signs."

d. Moses and Aaron vs. Egyptian magicians = God of Israel vs. gods of Egypt – Here, as throughout Exodus, there is an assumed need for signs of divine power to demonstrate that the God of Israel is also the God of all Creation and human history, having power over powerful Egypt and history and the forces of Nature no less than His own people.

KEY TERMS:

Theophany: Appearance of God

Abrahamic Covenant: Covenant between God and Abraham, the establishment of which is described in Genesis, as applying to Abraham's descendants through the line of Isaac and Jacob/Israel.

Sinaitic Covenant: Covenant between God and the people Israel, the establishment of which is described in Exodus.

Horeb: Name used by E (and D) to refer to the mountain on which God delivered the commandments and covenant to Israel through Moses, apparently the equivalent of Mount Sinai (the name for the mountain used by J and P).