Today’s Agenda

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

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

THE EXODUS AND HISTORY
Puzzles that Inhibit Understanding

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

- Time frame
  - Puzzling features
    - Uncertain starting point
    - Schematic chronologies
  - Suggested time frames
    - 17th-century exodus (c. 1540 BCE) [almost no scholars]
    - 15th-century exodus (c. 1440 BCE) [very few scholars]
    - 14th-century exodus (c. 1320 BCE) [most scholars]
    - Better fits 1 Kings 6:1
    - Better fits Egyptian history
    - Better fits Palestinian archaeology

- Miraculous/supernatural elements
  - The plagues: natural or legendary?
  - Over 2 million Israelites surviving in Sinai?

- Lack of external evidence
  - No Egyptian documentation

THE EXODUS AND HISTORY
Problems that Inhibit Belief

- Miraculous/supernatural elements
  - The plagues: natural or legendary?
  - Over 2 million Israelites surviving in Sinai?

- Lack of external evidence
  - No Egyptian documentation
  - No archaeological remains
    - Of Israelite travelers
    - Of neighboring kingdoms
  - Technological discontinuity

THE EXODUS AND HISTORY
Possible Responses to Problems

- "Extreme" positions
  - Reject biblical narrative altogether
  - Discount (lack of) archaeological evidence

- "Mediating" approaches
  - Compressed narration
  - Exaggerated numbers
  - Large-group assimilation of small-group experience
Themes in the Exodus Story

Pharaoh’s Hardened Heart

Who Hardened Pharaoh’s Heart?

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

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

Themes in the Exodus Story

Lessons of the Plagues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Morning warning</th>
<th>Blood</th>
<th>Flies</th>
<th>Hail</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Timed” warning</td>
<td>Frogs</td>
<td>Murrain</td>
<td>Locust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No warning</td>
<td>“Gnats”</td>
<td>Boils</td>
<td>“Darkness”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The LORD is real
The LORD favors Israel
The LORD is incomparable

Themes in the Exodus Story

Slavery and Freedom

- The “liberation” theme
- Laws for liberated slave-holders
- Freed to serve
  - “I am the LORD, and I will free you from the burdens of the Egyptians and deliver you from slavery (סחיב, ‘šuvəb = ‘service’) to them.”
  - “Let my people go, so that they may worship (תַּבֵּל, ‘abād = ‘serve’) me in the wilderness.”

Next Time in Religion 101

Unit 2C
The Torah’s Law Codes

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