Course requirements: Close readings of traditional commentators including Rashi, Ramban, Seforno; presentations of secondary readings by students—to be assigned in class; final paper.

You should have Torat Hayyim Shemot (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1991) and The Jewish Study Bible, edited by Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler (Oxford University Press, 2004), Exodus commentary by Jeffrey H. Tigay.

Introduction to second semester. The two trajectories of Exodus. Juxtapose Ex. 6:7 with Ex. 29:45-46 —"And I will take you unto me [‘לakens hakodesh י”ל לה] to be my people, and I will be your God. And you shall know that I, the Lord, am your God who freed you from the labors of the Egyptians." (See Jeffrey Tigay’s comment in JSB on this verse [though note that JSB does not translate ‘לakens’])

29:45-46—I will dwell among the children of Israel, and I will be their God. And they shall know [‘ויהי ירא בլא] that I am the Lord their God, who brought them out from the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them; I am the Lord their God. (See Jeffrey Tigay’s note in JSB on these verses) And compare with Ex. 6:8—I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and I will give it to you for a possession, I the Lord.

In this light, consider Ex. 13:17—"Now when Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, although it was nearer, for God said, ‘the people may have a change of heart when they see war, and return to Egypt.’" —What about Sinai?—see Seforno s.v. ... [TH pp. 163-164]

The two trajectories manifest not just in terms of goal and spatial direction—but in time as well. The festivals are one one level haq—the opportunity for pilgrimage and appearance; and on another level mikra kodesh. Moshe and Aaron have a richer deeper vision than the people; God has a fuller vision than any human, even Moshe and Aaron. And the narrative explores what happens as the multiple layers of vision unfold, interact, conflict and reconcile.

Shemot presents two-dimensional as well as three-dimensional versions of religion and covenant: fulfillment of promise; kinship; intimacy.

The two trajectories are meant to be parallel and mutually supportive. But what happens when they diverge? This is the story of the golden calf. The result was uncertain, but Exodus teaches that if reconciliation takes place, the result can be a stronger and richer relationship.

[Our new work begins here:]


Ex. 19: 4-6--What is the significance of “kingdom of priests and a holy nation”? Compare with Deut. 26: 16-19. Rashi on verses 4-6; note especially Rashi on ושם יכבד את השם ויהיה כ Paleo alphabet (Torat Hayyim page 243) and compare with Sefer Torah, s.v. ויהיה כ Paleo alphabet (Torat Hayyim pages 243-245).

The Decalogue/Ten Words/תינה תכרות. Literary setting and theological approaches: comparison between the Decalogue in Exodus and Deuteronomy; the nature of the theophany. The Tablets as physical objects. Ways of counting the Ten. Ramban on Ex. 20:7, s.v. יomit את יומ החב shuffle שכרה [p. 269 in Torat Hayyim]. Ramban addresses the differences between the Decalogue as presented in Exodus and the Decalogue in Deuteronomy. Ramban’s thesis is that the words on the first and second Tablets were exactly the same. How then does he explain the differences between Exodus and Deuteronomy?

The meaning(s) of monotheism; the ban on iconic worship; sanctity of God’s Name; Sabbath and creation; honoring parents; murder; adultery; theft; false witness; coveting.

Compare the varying motivations for Shabbat—Ex.20:11—imitatio dei; Deut. 5:15—ethical/social; Ex. 31:12-17- ות―visible sign of covenantal love (cf. Ex. 35:1-3—no fire on Shabbat)

Degel Mahaneh Efraham on 20:3: לא תעשנה לך פсал 3.

- Covenant-making and vision of God. Exodus 24—establishing kinship between God and Israel.
- The Covenant Code. Pilgrimage festivals; gifts to God. Festival cycles: Ex. 16:22-30; 23:14-19; 34:18-26; Lev. 23, 25; Num. 28, 29; Deut. 15, 16;
- Tabernacle as vision, communal project, ongoing presence. Detailed analysis of the structure and function of the Tabernacle and its furnishings.
- Aniconic worship. The Golded Calf
- Moshe as intercessor.
- Tent of Meeting outside the camp: Haran, Knohl
• What mode of governance does Exodus envision for Israel? See Ex. 15:18; 18:13-27; 19:6; 23:27. What word does Exodus not use for Israel’s leadership?

• The nature of Moses’ prophecy and its stages—Seforno on Ex. 3:2, s.v.

• Sifra, Sifre and Sifre Zuta on Ex. 33:23 and Num. 12.—what is פֶּן אָחָד?

• The end of Exodus with echoes of Gen.1; the trajectory to Leviticus and Numbers

Reading: Benjamin Sommer, “Revelation”

Bibliography


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