

Session 11 – Study Notes
Exodus 15: 1-27
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1. This section consists of two hymnic pieces voicing praise and thanksgiving to God for deliverance from the Egyptians.
2. The two songs of praise (Moses and the people vv.1-18; Miriam, v. 21) are preceded by nearly identical references to the saving act of God on behalf of Israel.
3. Salvation is God's act.
4. Any approach to salvation that *does not* eventually become worship reduces salvation to a concept or a program or a technique that we can master and therefore control.
5. Song has always been basic to the act of worship.
6. Without the experience of God's saving grace in our day-to-day lives, we are left with very little to sing about.
7. Structurally, the role given to women at the beginning of Exodus (the midwives, the mother, the sister, Pharaoh's daughter) is here returned to and provides an inclusion for Exodus 1-15.
8. In terms of the history of tradition, the Song of Miriam likely came first, and the Song of Moses is an expansion of this: You can see that her hymn provides the opening couplet to the song of Moses.
9. The references to musical instruments and dancing in which "all the women" participate allude to a more complex ritual in which the seas crossing is dramatically realized.
10. Therefore, vvs. 1-21 constitute a parallel to the Passover texts, and the two form an inclusion for the larger unit chapters 12 -15.
11. The sea symbolizes fear and prayer; the dry land indicates strength and confidence but the sea also symbolizes much more.
12. The wilderness journey of salvation history inaugurated with the drying up of the Red Sea (Exodus 14, 15) is forever more the before and after. And ends when the Lord dries up the Jordan River (Josh 4-5), allowing the Israelites to enter the promised land of Canaan.
13. The relationship between God's mercy and God's hard justice is a central theme of the Song.
14. The songs themselves are a product of a new experience, an experience of both God and people as liberator and liberated.
15. This human response to what God has done has a multidirectional character. Response is directed to
 - A) God: faith, trust, and thanksgiving
 - B) Israel's leadership: trust in Moses
 - C) Israelite generations yet to come: retelling the story and reappropriating its saving power within the various aspects of worship and religious commitment:
 - D) The wider world: witness through the acts of praise.

The center of attention in this chapter is praise and thanksgiving, which encompasses matters from both A and D and implies C.

16. The Egyptian enemy is certainly historical, but just as certainly more is involved. The Egyptians are also represented as metahistorical in that the chaotic forces of the world are concentrated there.

17. The forces God uses in the defeat of the Egyptians are nonhistorical (although they have a historical effect). The language of creation is drawn upon to speak of Israel's liberation from Egypt. God's activity in creation overturns that which is chaos.

18. It is called redemption (v 13) because it is the re-establishment of the created order of justice at a specific time and place. Hence, the importance of law for Exodus; cosmic order and social order are symbiotically related.

REFLECTION

- 1. Recall a song or a poem that helps you remember facts or an event. (ABC's, etc.) Share a song that sparks a memory for you every time you hear it played. Why do you think singing is such an effective tool for memorization?**
- 2. Why do you think the writer's included these songs in the story of Exodus? What does it add to the story?**
- 3. These victory songs are through the eyes of the Hebrew people. As Christians looking back in history, our understanding is that God is a liberator of all people and love is the motivation for divine action. How do we reconcile this understanding with the way God deals with the Egyptian people? What is the larger story being told here?**

Sources

1. The Book of Exodus by Brevard Childs
2. Exodus (Interpretation) by Terence Fretheim
3. The Particulars of Rapture by Rabbi Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg
4. Covenant and Conversation by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks
5. The New Interpreter's Bible