

409: Deliverance and Resurrection (Old Testament Lesson 16; April 17)

3/27: Ex 1-6

4/3: Ex 7-13

4/10: Ex 14-17

4/17: Easter

Outline

- Intro
- Reading review
- Discussion
 - Exodus, Passover, Lord's Supper, Easter
 - Liberation
 - Commemoration
 - Reinterpretation
 - Resurrection
 - Is reinterpretation appropriation?
 - Scriptural descriptions of God
- Preview for next week
- Conclusion

Really appreciate the timing of this, how we get to talk about Exodus/Passover/Easter all together, since they line up in origins.

Redemption through reinterpretation and thinking in a new way which is what the Greek repentance means

Say some words about claiming/transforming/reinterpreting/appropriating traditions (Daniel's shared post about Passover)

It struck me that this season is as much about reinterpretation as it is about escape or resurrection. In fact, grief work, maturing, and just living well can be summarized by increasing our ability to shift and update our relationship with the world, and especially our stories.

Framing: Invite you to reflect on where you need deliverance in your life, where you need resurrection, and where you need reinterpretation (the answer to the last is everywhere)

Your friendly Sunday School reminder: The stories in the scriptures do not describe what happened. We learn to take scripture stories literally as children, and many (perhaps most) readers never revisit that assumption. But that is not how we do in our EGD ward.

Instead of or in addition to being disappointed the Bible stories "ain't necessarily so", stay curious and you will find the wonder of the more complex and interesting reality.

Also, while stories about miracles are fun, and stories about the afterlife can be comforting, nothing is more urgent than how the stories in the scriptures can help you and your life be better here and now, in this life and in this moment.

Otherwise put, the way we remember something proves more important than what happened, and the way we respond proves most important of all.

Also, I adore the movie Prince of Egypt.

Note about historicity of Exodus, from Jewish Study Bible: “the story of Hebrews migrating to Egypt during a famine and being enslaved there under Rameses II, and later leaving under Moses, during or by the time of Merneptah [Ramses II’s son], is not inherently implausible. Moreover, if the Israelites had invented their history, it seems more likely that they would have portrayed themselves as the original inhabitants of their land rather than as interlopers with a humiliating background as slaves” (104).

First, to the reading:

There’s lots of unfamiliar and even troubling details in this story, and that’s ok. Makes for great discussion: What portrayal of God do we see in these chapters? How does this portrayal line up with your understanding of God?

We have a gut response/relationship to *our idea* of scripture stories, not the reality, so when we dig in we either ignore or it gets muddy.

1: New Pharaoh who “knew not Joseph” is threatened by the Israelites, pushes them into forced labor to build Egyptian cities, they thrive anyway. Pharaoh commands the boys be killed; they thrive anyway.

2: Moses’ mother hides him then puts him in the river; daughter of Pharaoh finds Moses. Moses’ mother gets to help raise him because of Miriam’s cleverness. Moses kills one of the Egyptian taskmasters. Moses marries Zipporah and hangs out in Midian until the Pharaoh dies. God “remembers” his covenant with the Israelites.

3: Moses encounters God in the burning bush, learns his name, and receives a call to deliver the Israelites.

4: God addresses Moses’ concerns; a very weird passage about circumcision.

5: Moses and Aaron’s first request: celebrate a religious festival. Pharaoh’s answer “Who is the Lord?” (Theme of competition between Egyptian gods and God of Israel) God is like, “Do you speak... plague?”

6: “You will be my people; I will be your God” theme (And “I’ll show the Egyptians I’m your god). Genealogy interlude.

7: Moses vs the Egyptian priests. First three plagues: Blood, frogs, vermin.

8: Pattern: Let my people go. No? Ok, more plagues. Insects, pestilence (livestock disease), boils. God punishes the Egyptians and protects the Israelites, showing he is in the midst of his

people. As the plagues progress, the Egyptians and Pharaoh make partial concessions, but a core theme is that only total surrender to God is acceptable.

9: Plagues 7-9, showing that God has power over nature and life. Hail, locusts, Darkness (but something like a sandstorm)

10: "I have hardened his heart and the heart of his sons" disturbs us, but remember that in the view of these authors, the important point to emphasize is that the God of Israel is the biggest baddest God who has control over everything and is going to show everyone. (The most common view of god in the ancient world was polytheism, and so the Israelite response to that was most often something like "Our one God that we worship is bigger and can do more than all of your gods and is also in charge of everything")

This makes for troubling narrative. Pharaoh repents (16-17); Moses pleads with God (18); which works (19), but then God hardens Pharaoh's heart (20). Pharaoh tries to do what Moses asks, though still holding back (24), but again God hardens his heart (27).

11: Instructions for Passover (composite sources here make for some confusion in the narrative); Final plague is announced (death of the Egyptian firstborn, corresponding with the Egyptian murder of the Israelite baby boys)

12: Preparations for the Exodus and Passover. Two layers of tradition: either God kills the firstborn, or a "Destroyer" kills them, which requires the blood on the doorposts. Passover comes from the word "Pesakh" which means "Protection", likely coming from an ancient protective magical ritual against demons/evil spirits. Similarly, the "unleavened bread" (Matzah) was likely part of a magical ritual to ensure a healthy yield of grain. The layers of religion are interesting! This is so common in world religion and scripture that it is the norm: older distinct traditions with their own meaning and purpose are brought together and reinterpreted.

13: More religious/ritual instructions. "Every firstborn is mine" might have involved human sacrifice as well as animal. Origin of tefillin and mezuzot (scriptures in leather capsules fasted to forehead and upper arm, along with the words on the doorposts)

14: Again we have this "hard heart" theme with the purpose that God will have a chance to show his power and dominion/superiority. Crossing of the "Red Sea" which is really "Reed Sea/Sea of Reeds". There are two separate accounts woven together, and we can unravel them relatively easily! (See notes linked to in episode)

15: Song of Moses! One of the oldest parts of the Bible. "The language and style of the poem are archaic and share many features with Ugaritic poetry of the Late Bronze Age, suggesting that it is one of the oldest poems in the Bible" and hearkens "back to ancient Near Eastern myths about the storm god's defeat of the sea god followed by the building of his palace/temple" Then the people start complaining.

16: Complaining about food. After deliverance/change of context come trials, and people complain (profound lessons here) Manna is provided

17: Complaining about water. Moses complains to God. God miracles some water out of a rock. Aaron and Hur hold up Moses' hands so they can miracle a battle.

My favorite moments this readthrough:

I had the "Plagues" song from Prince of Egypt going through my head

16: When we move from an old to a new context, even if that is necessary liberation, it is usually HARD and scary and overwhelming. We long for the comfortable things about the old way of

being. We need to open up to a new way of being, of surviving (that divine answer being the manna) Share about surrender prayers

Discussion:

- Exodus, Passover, Lord's Supper, Easter
 - Liberation
 - Commemoration
 - Reinterpretation
 - Resurrection
- Is reinterpretation appropriation?
- Scriptural descriptions of God

Levels:

- Historical escape from Egypt
- Reflection/interpretation/response that resulted in our biblical texts (multiple sources woven together)
- Reflections on the biblical traditions that led to the Passover commemoration (which in turn further influenced the texts)
- This continues in Judaism today

- Jesus commemorates and reinterprets the Passover meal (not Christian at this point)
- Jesus' followers believe in the resurrection
- The celebration of the Lord's supper becomes a core part of Christian worship
- Lord's supper commemoration became sacrament/communion
- Commemorating passover and resurrection became Easter

The Exodus: Liberation

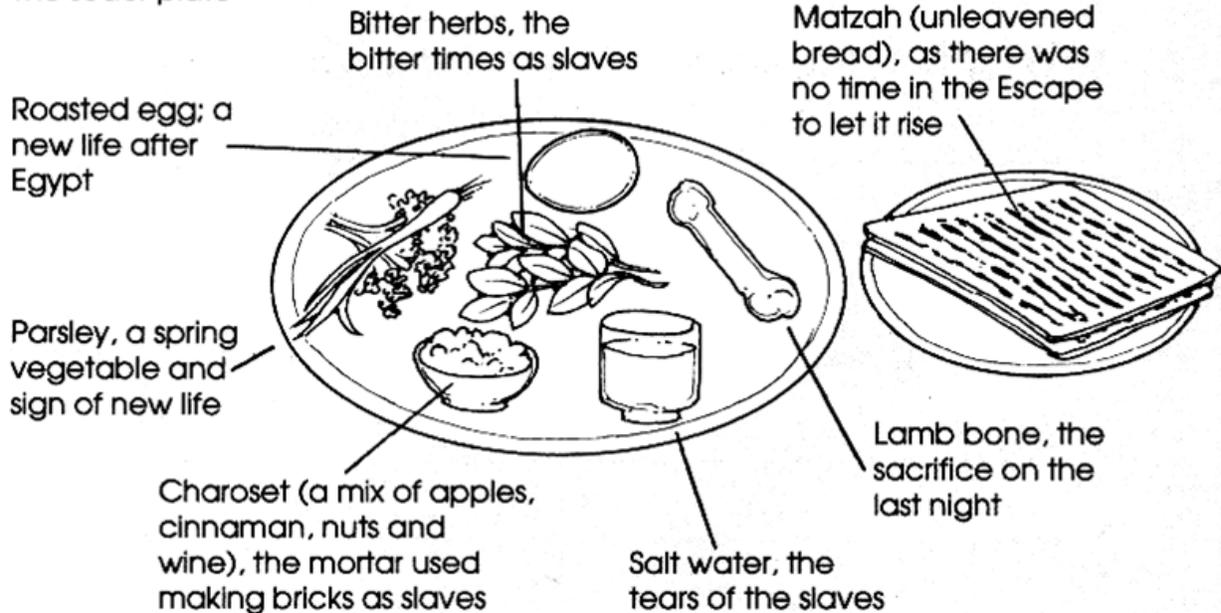
Sometimes the answer to your prayer is a change of context (first marriage/divorce). We are literally limited and oppressed in key ways that we have to take seriously. The call to social justice is to help make the world a better place, not just in some abstract way, but to actually help make our society and its institutions better for everyone. LDS scripture is VERY adamant about this.

Passover: Commemoration

Elements of the Passover meal:

<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/the-seder-plate/>

The seder plate



A note on Christians celebrating Seder: Don't. Looking at Exodus, Passover, Last Supper, and Easter all together provides a powerful example of the way that different traditions interplay over time, and that's beautiful. I think it's a sign of our creativity and ability to update and integrate old traditions into new circumstances.

We hear quite a bit about "cultural appropriation", something that was covered in my Intercultural Chaplaincy program, as you can imagine. I like this simple question: Would the person whose tradition this is approve of the way I am engaging with it? Would a native adherent "sign off" on what I am doing?

Think about it from an LDS perspective: Visit a sacrament meeting? Yes please. Take the sacrament? Not yet. Attend a temple open house? Yes please. Wear garments? Not without going through the temple.

Embrace your distinctive heritage and expression, personal story

How do you celebrate holidays? How do you commemorate important events in your own life and family story?

Finally, Last Supper and Easter:

Encourage you to celebrate all of Holy Week, not just Easter:

I think the most significant thing about Holy Week is that it fosters a holistic approach to Easter. It is not cheap celebration; it is full priced, high cost joy. It does not just celebrate life. It celebrates new, glorious, unexpected life after the agony of disappointment, betrayal, loss, rejection, and the death of everything we know.

Sunday: **Palm Sunday** (Triumphal Entry, reflect on celebrating that knowing what is to come. Can we celebrate our worth and potential even knowing there will be failures and transitions and even death?)

Monday: Holy Monday (Anointing at Bethany, royal and burial)

Tuesday: Holy Tuesday (Passion predictions, awareness of transitions, the death of what is)

Wednesday: Spy Wednesday; "Tenebrae" (extinguishing of candles. Betrayal by Judas, reflection on how we betray and are betrayed)

Thursday: **Maundy Thursday** (not Monday, describes ritual of footwashing), Last Supper, washing of the feet (reorienting, finding new meaning in old symbols, love and service)

Friday: **Good Friday** (Crucifixion/Death)

Saturday: **Holy/Black Saturday** (Burial, moments of grief, slowing down, stopping, quiet rest, however painful) Rest is an act of trust and faith in ourselves

Sunday: **Easter Sunday**

I was wrong! Thanks to Daniel McClellan for this:

<https://bam.sites.uiowa.edu/faq/egg-hiding-rabbit-and-easter?fbclid=IwAR0jNgP-wfdGcL0Z4Xuz-DlwxC6OTy0aEeivFKV1iSWVZ4qfn4R9rPxQz0>

<https://www.youtube.com/user/maklelan?app=desktop>

As I have done grief work and grief training, I am most struck by the simple truth that so much of grief is simple acceptance, updating to what is, however we feel about it. And the stories we tell ourselves and each other are a matter of life and death. Even a matter of resurrection.

Finally, Easter. The idea of the Resurrection can give us comfort and hope, but I think a more urgent issue in our lives is the "resurrections" from the "small deaths" as Carol Lynn Pearson calls them. Sometimes we need to be new. Sometimes it feels like our lives are in ashes, burnt down and cool, without even embers of renewal. Sometimes our lives feel like that cold rock tomb. We are in the darkness of Holy Saturday. (Share testimony of breakdowns to breakthroughs, the death of what we know that often makes room for what is better than we could imagine.

Preview for next Lesson:

410: Covenant Disappointment and Renewal (Come Follow Me Week 18)

4/24: Ex 18-20

5/1: Ex 24; 31-34

18: Moses catches up his father-in-law. Jethro teaches Moses about delegating and organizational structure.

19: Moses and the people prepare at the base of Mt. Sinai

20: Ten Commandments

24: Covenant/animal sacrifice ceremony

31: Preparation for building the tabernacle

32: Israelites make golden calf, Moses breaks the tablets, Levites kill thousands then God sends a plague

33: God is symbolically alienated from Israel (Tabernacle is outside the camp); Moses pleads with God on behalf of Israel

34: Restoration of the Covenant

Safety in process not point, engage in the conversation, the process that results in healthy relationship and growth

What are your personal 10 commandments?

Inspiring and interesting points:

<https://religiondispatches.org/why-christians-should-not-host-their-own-passover-seders/?fbclid=IwAR2DcBH2sg8sA4bwAyqG7MMzsqZGofL4dstEM3sb7xpE-DGSJQMqZI132jc>

Explore each level

Ben Paxton:

4.5/5 stars

The first book I ever read about Bible scholarship was “Who Wrote the Bible,” by Friedman. Reading his most recent book “The Exodus” took me back in a good way. Friedman has a talent for making scholarship accessible and interesting.

In this book he defends the historicity of the exodus as a real event. As many know, the lack of any archeological evidence for the exodus or the subsequent invasion of Canaan has been discouraging for some believers. There has been nothing found in the sand as we might expect if millions had been there for 40 years and no evidence of destruction in Canaan to suggest a large scale invasion.

Friedman turns to the text and argues that the exodus only involves the Levites who subsequently assimilated with the rest of the tribes already living in Canaan. He finds extensive scriptural support for this. Only Levites have Egyptian names and are associated with Egyptian religious rites, song of Deborah (set in Israel) does not mention Levites and song of Miriam (set in Egypt) does not mention Israel, etc. I find his arguments persuasive and supported by his readings. I found it interesting that many of these arguments mirror those for a limited geography model for the Book of Mormon.

But he goes farther and describes why the exodus was important for the establishment of monotheism, and for the ethical imperative of Judaism to love one’s neighbor and care for aliens—because Levites (and eventually all Jews by extension) were aliens in Egypt, etc. (He then brutally destroys Dawkins treatment of this topic which was fun because I really hated that book (God Delusion).)

Highly recommended for everyone!