

"INTRODUCTION TO EXODUS"

(THE MESSAGE)

(Eugene Peterson)

The human race is in trouble. We've been in trouble for a long time. Enormous energies have been and continue to be expended by many, many men and women to get us out of the trouble we are in—to clean up the world mess. The skill, the perseverance, the intelligence, the devotion of the people who put their shoulders to the wheel to pull us out of the muck—parents and teachers, healers and counselors, rulers and politicians, writers and pastors—are impressive.

At the center and core of this work is God. The most comprehensive term for what God is doing to get us out of the mess we are in is salvation. Salvation is God doing for us what we can't do for ourselves. Salvation is the biggest word in the vocabulary of the people of God. The Exodus is a powerful and dramatic and true story of God working salvation. The story has generated an extraordinary progeny through the centuries as it has reproduced itself in song and poem, drama and novel, politics and social justice, repentance and conversion, worship and holy living. It continues to capture the imagination of men and women, especially men and women in trouble. It is significant that God does not present us with salvation in the form of an abstract truth, or a precise definition or a catchy slogan, but as story.

Exodus draws us into a story with plot and characters, which is to say, with design and personal relationships. Story is an invitation to participate, first through our imagination and then, if we will, by faith—with our total lives in response to God. This Exodus story continues to be a major means that God uses to draw men and women in trouble out of the mess of history into the kingdom of salvation. About half the book (chapters 1-19 and 32-34) is a gripping narrative of an obscure and severely brutalized people who are saved from slavery into a life of freedom. The other half (chapters 20-31 and 35-40) is meticulous, some think tedious, basic instruction and training in living the saved, free life. The story of salvation is not complete without both halves.

