

**THE APPLICATION OF THE EXODUS DIVINE-PRESENCE NARRATIVES AS A
BIBLICAL SOCIO-ETHICAL PARADIGM FOR THE CONTEMPORARY
REDEEMED.**

by

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DECLARATION.

I declare that “The Application of the Exodus Divine-Presence Narratives as a Biblical Socio-Ethical Paradigm for the Contemporary Redeemed” is my own work and that all the sources I have used and quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete referencing.

Signature: (Dr. G. C. Pereira).

Date.

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Supervisor: _____

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May the Lord richly bless each one,

“Piff” G. C. Pereira.

DEDICATION.

I dedicate this thesis to the memory of my dear friends and former employers:

To **Maria** and **Piero Lombardi**, whose memory I will appreciate and value for the rest of my life.

SUMMARY.

God is ontologically *omni-present*, yet he is spoken of as being present or even being absent. The presence and the absence of God are relational concepts. His presence generally shows his favor and is for the benefit of his people; and his absence indicates his disfavor. But sometimes his presence was for judgment too. The people of God are his people precisely because he is favorably present with them. God's presence with his people bestows upon them a special position in relation to him, and a blessed future for them.

God is Spirit, and his presence is not limited to visible forms. Many times God's presence is simply indicated by divine speech. We have seen that God chose at times to reveal himself through theophanies, and these appearances related to humans in different ways. God's presence in Exodus comes in various ways, and his presence has particular significance. Finally, God revealed himself in the person of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. For the Christian, Christ dwells with us and within us by his Spirit and through him we have access to the Father (Eph.1:18).

The presence of God is redemptive. Israel was redeemed by the present God, Yahweh; and the Christian has been redeemed by the present God, the Lord Jesus Christ. As Evangelicals we believe that they are one and the same person, and the method of redemption is metaphorically equated in the New Testament. The Christian is empowered by the Holy Spirit and a new creation; two inseparable concepts that give us our identity. While Israel was redeemed as a nation, we are a redeemed people who are individually united in the Church of Jesus Christ; and in our local assemblies we are to maintain and reflect our unity by being a community. As Israel was a nation *for* the nations, so the Church is a community of witnesses to God's righteousness and rule for the nations.

Humans are to relate to God as Creator and as Redeemer, because they are accountable to him according to his creation and redemption (or re-creation)

principles. Accountability is meaningful only in an ethical context. Man relates to God by acts of obedience to his creation and redemption principles. The chief duty of the Church is to make known the available person, purpose and power of God.

God's loving expression is his availability for a relationship with man. His self-revelation and gifts are for our benefit. His creation and creative intentions are for our benefit. His redemption and redemptive intentions are for our benefit. More so, we are accountable for the imperative to perpetuate God's creation and redemption intentions. If they are expressions of love and intended to benefit, then they are ethical in nature. Our response to God and to creation at large must therefore also be ethical in nature.

Our concern in this dissertation is to realize the socio-ethical significance of the Presence in redemption for the people of God, and in particular for the Evangelical Church. Having explored the Exodus texts from a *synchronic* approach, we have used the final canonical Exodus-narrative of Presence through socio-rhetorical exegesis and theological reflection to derive socio-ethical principles for our contemporary application. These principles are applied for specific contemporary contexts and questions in order to posit ethical social proposals, social responsibility, and social action.

We are able to see how our Exodus pericopes were employed in the biblical Old and New Testaments. Their use in the Psalms, the Prophets and the New Testament reflected an authoritative theological interpretation of these Exodus texts for Evangelicals, merely because they are in the Bible. These Scriptural theological interpretations were a warrant for us to seek a theological interpretation of the canonical texts as the platform for socio-ethical interaction. Because we are so far removed temporarily, socio-ethical transfer from then to now was by no means cut-and-dried. Only through theological reflection are we able to derive socio-ethical principles for contemporary application, at least within an Evangelical Ecclesiology.

Presence is applied theologically under the categories *revelation*, *redemption* and *relationship*. We are able to show how the principles of revelation, redemption and relationship related God and his people in ways that gave them a special identity as a community that must respond in a special and particular way to God and within itself. The people had to be monotheistic. Their response had monotheistic, ethical implications and social implications.

Presence is also applied socially under the categories derived naturally from the Exodus narrative:

1. Israel's Self-Consciousness as a Community.
2. Yahweh's Presence and the Community's Redemption.
3. Yahweh's Agent in the Redemption of the Community.
4. Counter Forces to the Creation of the Redeemed Community.
5. Covenant and Redemption Undergirds Social Identity.
6. The Socio-ethical Response of the Redeemed Community.
7. Redemption as Social Dialogue.
8. Covenant as Societal Establishment.
9. Covenant and Societal Conflict.
10. Covenant and Societal Self-consciousness.

Each of these categories is discussed under the same sub-categories, namely, *revelation*, *redemption* and *relationship*. We are able to derive socio-ethical principles in this way; principles which could be applied in an Evangelical ecclesiology.

Indeed, the Church is the best social context in which these principles are to be applied, and within that context we are able to derive socio-ethical proposals. The Church is posited as a multiplicity of microcosmic communities, all related to God through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. We are able to make social proposals for the kind of social responsibilities and actions required within the church community.

These socio-ethical proposals must emanate from the social vision of the Church, which is theological and eschatological in nature.

The Church, as an eschatological community, must serve as an example and vision for society at large, recognizing that society at large also has a different and more complex make-up, and that socio-ethical transfer of Christian principles is not simplistically cut-and-dried. We have to find creative ways to translate the biblical imperative in a contemporary social context. This, we will conclude is only possible because we are able to apply it from and in a narratological context. We can however not simply use the same categories of revelation, redemption and relationship in a socio-ethical application.

Ethics in general and social ethics in particular needs to be considered according to categories that were naturally conducive to ethical discourse. But these categories are also to be integrated with the theological categories in such a way that does not strain the ethical discourse. Surprisingly, the ethical categories of *God* (theological), *man* (social/political) and *land* (economic) easily lends itself to be discussed with the sub-categories of revelation, redemption and relationship. In fact, while it is fairly easy to do so under the *theological* and *social/political* categories, it is not so easy to distinguish the sub-categories for discussion under *economy*. We are forced to blur the lines between revelation and redemption on the one hand, and between redemption and relationship on the other.

We can obviously not make proposals dealing with every socio-ethical issue. This is not our intention. We are, however, able to provide a socio-ethical vision for the Church, and thus, to a limited extent, for society at large. Because of our socio-ethical vision, it has become necessary for us to sketch the Church as an eschatological people which is a blessing to the world by its functioning in particular roles; as example (salt and light), evangelist, prophetic voice, teacher, agent, facilitator, negotiator, and partner.

As *example* the Church is meant to be a pattern for society. The Church, which finds its indicative and imperative values upon the biblical text, can be a blessed pattern to society. As *evangelist*, the Church alone has the message of redemption, and it needs to share it with society. The best way for society to change is through regeneration. Our first priority is to extend the Kingdom of God in this world through the message of Jesus Christ and then through our godly influence. As *prophetic voice*, the Church must make known God's will and ways. It is mainly a voice that speaks to issues of social justice, social responsibility and social reconstruction. Aspects of oppression, exploitation and other injustices must be condemned, and proposals for redress and reconstruction must be made. The Church must entrench democratic values and be the voice that calls for integrity and accountability. As *teacher*, the Church's first place of teaching must be on a theological plane. Theological awareness encourages moral and ethical awareness. In short, they can teach on a whole range of issues that encourages good relationship, both vertically and horizontally. The Church can train leaders of integrity. As *agent*, the Church can act in society on behalf of Government, business and other organizations who have projects that aim at Christian-likeminded outcomes. Conversely, they can also act as agent for the people and community interests. The Church must be the redemptive agent in society. As *facilitators*, the Church facilitates important co-operations; with Government, business and other organizations. The Church can facilitate socio-ethical debates, forums, workshops, economic pro-active and ecological and environmental projects. As *negotiators* and *partners*, the Church can act on behalf of the poor and the marginalized. The rich and the poor are to act according to the tenets of love and justice. The Church can help inculcate these tenets, and to teach tenets of good work-ethic. The Church must be a redeemed people with redemptive aims; all for the glory of their redeeming God.

The ten key terms:

1. Canonical Approach

2. Theological Reflection
3. Socio-rhetorical exegesis
4. Divine Presence
5. Exodus Redemptive Presence Narratives
6. Exodus Theology – Revelation
7. Exodus Theology – Redemption
8. Exodus Theology – Relationship
9. Exodus Ethics and Society
10. Exodus and the Church - Evangelicalism – Socio-ethical Application



TOPIC TITLE:

The Application of the Exodus Divine-Presence Narratives as a Biblical Socio-Ethical Paradigm for the Contemporary Redeemed.

PREFACE.

Israel, as the covenant people of God, have experienced their God in many different ways. He called them to be his people by means of promise. The whole process began with one man who was called from paganism, and who believed God. The promise made to Abram opened up possibilities of this people's manifold experiences of God; notably a people who experienced their God's presence.

Our concern in this dissertation is to consider this presence of God with his people in the book of Exodus. How did that presence come about? How did that presence express itself? How did they as a people relate to the presence? How did that presence influence their conditions and their identity? One thing is certain in a summary answer to these important questions, is that their indicative situation became the basis for their imperative response.

Our interest does not end with the Israelite experiences and responses of and to the presence of God. The Scriptures can only fulfill their role if it is translatable to our lives. For present-day believers there is an imperative to apply the principles of the Scriptures so that our relationship with the same God may be enhanced. This is by no means a new approach to the use of the Scriptures. New Testament believers so applied the Old Testament to their beliefs and actions. We too have to find ways to apply the Scriptures to our beliefs and practices. This present dissertation seeks to do this to some extent as will be seen from the title of the work.

1. Understanding the Title of the Work.

The substance of our study revolves around the matter of the divine presence in relation to God's people. God's people are identified as such by the fact that God has redeemed them. The redeemed are otherwise called believers. How does the

divine presence affect believers today? How do we translate the experiences of God's people in biblical history to God's people in the present? What effects did the divine presence then have on them; and what effects can we expect to have in these days? How are we to identify, both ourselves and our roles, with current society in the light of our claim to the divine presence?

The divine presence in relation to Israel as the ancient people of God is in this instance gleaned from the Exodus narratives. It is from this story of redemption that we seek to formulate a theology of presence. Because their theology of presence brought to them a particular response within their relationship with God, we are contending that our response, as people redeemed through Jesus Christ, to the divine presence must be ethical so that we may be "salt and light" in our present society.

The imperatives of the theology of presence are only expected from the people of God as it must always be dependant upon the fact of redemption and covenant (here we shall only consider the aspects of redemption). Presence and redemption are inextricably bound together. Both are acts of divine grace. God's grace through redemption is that which brings about the beginning of a new existence. This new existence is the essential indicative for the people of God. What we do must emanate from who we are. Who we are comes first. We are the redeemed of God.

Presence and holiness are also inextricably bound together. As the Israelites were, so we are a royal priesthood and a holy nation by virtue of the divine presence and our redemption (1Pt.2:9 *cf.* Ex.19:6). As the people of God we must always seek to propose the theology of divine presence as the motivation of beneficial change to secular society. The best way to do so is for us to be seen as an alternative and desirable community. This summarizes the essential imperative of God's people. Our relevance must be felt in the context of our geographical location and our cultural setting; how do we affect South African society?

To summarize: the divine presence must be the basis for a biblical socio-ethical theology of evangelical believers wherever they are; and for us, particularly as Evangelicals.

2. The Problem (Question).

Following the meaning of the topic title, the problem or question we are trying to solve is stated as follows:

What role does the divine presence in the Exodus narratives play in redeemed Israel's identity, and how may evangelical believers apply a biblical socio-ethical understanding within our contemporary context from them?

We must thus establish *an understanding of redeemed Israel's identity* as it relates to the divine presence. We know that that presence affected their redemption and their response to redemption, confirmed their covenantal relationship, and concretized their self-understanding as the people of God. How this was done is to be gleaned from specific Exodus presence-narratives.

An exegesis from each of these passages will help us develop *a theology of presence* from the Book of Exodus, but mainly from the first eighteen (redemption) chapters. Israel's theology of presence made them respond to God in a specific way. We need to see what *the socio-ethical response* of the Israelites was. This response was defined from a reaction to that presence as well as from specific imperatives that were given to them by the present God.

As *Christian* believers, we too must formulate a theology of presence from the Book of Exodus, and from that theology, a particular *biblical socio-ethical understanding*. How is this understanding to influence our interaction within *contemporary society*? The crux-question must therefore be: How may we apply the Exodus divine presence redemption narratives in a current church, and

particularly Evangelical context? The present writer speaks particularly from an Evangelical mindset, and more particularly as a Baptist. The Baptist understanding of church is thus the general view here posited.

Since the problem (question) gives our research the direction it needs, we may define our research objectives as follows:

What do we wish to research?

- Some of the narratological occurrences of God's Presence in Exodus
- How God's presence functions in these narratives with reference to Israel's self-understanding as God's people.
- How is the identity of Israel as a nation expressed with particular emphasis on their socio-ethical understanding?

What are the objectives of the research?

- To explore the primary narratological occurrences of divine presence in the redeeming texts (from chapters 1 – 19) in Exodus.
- To establish the human response to that Presence, both within the narrative and within Israel's faith reflected in the Psalms and Latter Prophets, and later the Church's faith reflected in the New Testament.
- To establish how this links with the biblical understanding of relationship and ethical imperative through a Theology of Presence.
- To derive an understanding of divine Presence from Exodus as it impacts upon Israelite social ethics.
- To see how the socio-ethical principles of the biblical text are to be applied to our contemporary Evangelical context.

3. **Purpose of the Title of the Work.**

Our current context is largely influenced by our current needs. The believing community needs to make a greater impact on secular society. The only

authoritative stance that can be made by the believing community is that the Scriptures are relevant and applicable to them. They must be seen as the community of God who takes seriously the theology of the Bible. Theology is the description of the main ideas of the theological content of Exodus. Certain theological truths are timeless and therefore ought to be applied practically.

Theology on the other hand is meaningless without the Presence of the authoritative and living God and is derived from the understanding of the present God. Authority must be vested in the person of God. How is this God present? The theology of Presence will validate (or invalidate) any so-called biblical socio-ethical framework. We therefore want to validate our socio-ethical framework with a theology of the divine presence.

Lastly, we seek to encourage the community of Christian believers to be the example of true community as they “practice the Presence” of God. A community with a constant sense of God’s presence will function as the “ideal” society. This is what the world must see in us; especially a morally deteriorating world. A morally deteriorating society must find their example in a community who lives in the presence of God, and in communion with the present God.

We would be remiss if we do not define what we mean by the presence of God. Firstly, from a dogmatic perspective, we understand that God is omnipresent. This we take as a presupposition, and will not set out to try and prove. Secondly, for the Israelite community that came out of Egypt, the Presence meant the manifestations initiated by God himself, which were acts of him revealing himself to them. These we seek to demonstrate from the Book of Exodus. Thirdly, for Evangelical Christian believers the presence of God is the presence of the Trinitarian God in the person of the Holy Spirit within the individual believer and corporately among them. This too we will demonstrate briefly from the New Testament from a more-or-less dogmatic approach, and for the purpose of creating “equivalence” between the redeemed of Israel and the redeemed of Jesus Christ. Finally, for the rest of

humanity, the presence of God is not direct, but mediated through the works of God in creation and through the redeemed people of God. They are able to see the invisible qualities of God by the things he created, so that all are without excuse (Rom. 1:19-20). This, too, we take as a matter of fact, without having to substantiate it further from the Scriptures.

We believe that this research will make the following contributions:

- It will present Old Testament Theology with a Socio-Ethical framework for Israel on the basis of their National Identity derived from the redeeming Exodus Divine Presence narratives, and
- It will propose a Socio-Ethical framework, derived from the Exodus Presence narratives, for a contemporary Evangelical setting.

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INTRODUCTION.

This introduction will also describe our particular *theoretical framework*. In this regard it is perhaps important to state at the outset that we consider ourselves theologically “conservative”. We hold that the Bible (Old and New Testament) is the Word of God, and that for us the whole concept of divine revelation is unavoidable when it comes to the Bible. We also believe in the possibility of “miracles” which are brought about by the living God through whatever agent he wills. The reason why we put the word in inverted commas is because we recognize that “miracle” is an inappropriate word to use with Hebraic thought, for no word in the Mesoretic text properly translates as “miracle” but rather as “signs” and “wonders” (Eakin 1977:475). That means that miracles have significance beyond themselves.

The claim for the inspiration and authority of Scripture is the claim for the uniqueness of the canonical context of the Church through which the Holy Spirit works. Klingbeil (2003:403) correctly observes, that, if the biblical text is only a collection of diverse ancient texts, as historical criticism posits, then it cannot claim an authority in terms of its content. However, if the biblical text began with revelation from a being outside our own system, then the issue of authority needs to be addressed from a different angle. We say that that angle is from a canonical context. The Scriptures of the Church function as the vehicle for God’s special communicating of himself to his church and the world. If the decision on canon were only historically conditioned, why should we be limited to them in our contemporary theological work? Canonization was chiefly an expression of faith in the whole process. (Childs 1970:104). We further believe that it exists in its final state as our Scriptures by the providence of God. Henry (1999:2:316) reminds us that it came about by faith and providence. He continues to say: Historical observation can neither demonstratively prove nor disprove the operative providence of God in history. Nor can it demonstratively certify that Jesus did or did not rise from the dead. Nor, for that matter, can the historical method indubitably establish that Jesus was crucified by Roman soldiers, or even that Caesar crossed

the Rubicon on some past momentous day, however “probable” it may be that he crossed the Rubicon routinely, if indeed he crossed it at all. Historical research is equally limited in investigating both biblical and secular claims about the past. Whether conducted by Cornelius Van Til or by Arnold Toynbee, historical investigation provides only provisional and not certain knowledge of the past.

Many believe that the exegetical task must chiefly be a “scientific” task. We recognize the need for uncovering the historical information, and agree with Le Roux (2007a:5) that more and more scholars experience an elusion of the true meaning and a feeling of disillusionment with the method that excludes historical information. While we deal with some historical-critical issues, we disagree with its basic presupposition that views history as a closed continuum, an unbroken series of causes and effects in which there is no room for transcendence (Ebeling 1963:79-97). In this instance we value Hasel’s (1991:198) observation. He believes that the method that prides itself on its scientific nature and objectivity turns out to be in the grip of its own dogmatic presuppositions and philosophical premises about the nature of history. Another dissenting voice is Miscall (1992:39) when he says about historical criticism “... the atomistic strategies that divided and subdivided the biblical texts into sources and their diverse parts and from the assumption that meaning lies in reference to an extra-textual historical reality.” No, we must therefore accept with Gorman (2009:12) that exegesis is both a science and an art, not forgetting its supernatural character too.

We, further, align ourselves also with Childs (1970:141) when he says that the historical critical method is an inadequate method for studying the Bible as the Scriptures of the Church because it does not work from the needed context. It is not to say for a moment that the critical method is incompatible with Christian faith, but when operating from its own chosen context, it is incapable of either raising or answering the full range of questions which the Church is constrained to direct to its Scriptures. The critical method proves to be inadequate because it sets up an iron curtain between the past and the present. Klingbeil (2003:403) concurs with

the conclusion that historical criticism tends to imprison the biblical text in the past without providing “objective” tools to uncover that past. Childs goes on to say that the historical critical method is seen to be inadequate for the theological task of exegesis from the evidence in the modern concept of biblical commentary. Exegesis as a theological discipline has been lost (1970:142). We will therefore attend to the text primarily as a theological text, being aware of the challenges of applying the appropriate theological task of biblical interpretation (Gorman 2007:117). Henry (1999:2:315) demonstrates the point: ‘The impossibility of establishing theological doctrines by historical method is not here disputed. No amount of historical inquiry can prove that Jesus is the Christ, or that the Hebrews rightly believed that Yahweh rescued them from Egypt. “It is hard to overemphasize the impossibility of obtaining *historical* evidence for the view that certain events are ‘the mighty acts of God’,” writes John Marsh (*The Fulness of Time*, p. 7)”.

It must be emphatically stressed that there is a divine dimension in biblical history which the historical-critical method is unable to deal with. For this reason Old Testament scholarship is changing from a purely historical-critical methodology to one that focuses on bigger text-portions. Le Roux advises: “Een so ‘n moontlikheid (vir die studie van die Pentateug) is om voorlopig literêre-kritiese analiese te vermy en eerder op die groot vorm (Enneateug) en teksblokke (soos die aartsvaders en die uittog) te fokus. In die proses kan die pastorale waarde van die Pentateugkritiek ook beklemtoon word” (2005:27). More important than the historical-critical *method*, which is waning, is a historical understanding of the reality of the text (Le Roux 1994:201).

Our historical consideration is therefore mainly the history of the *narrative time*. We will try to weave into the history of the Israelite story the considerations of “the climate, the geography, the vegetation” etc. that Le Roux (2007b:992) mentions with respect to Renan. We agree that this kind of historical information endows the story with life and energy. This history, however, is **not** necessarily the history of

the time of narration (Groenewald 2007:120-121). We are concerned with the history in the narrative.

The canonical context allows the different layers the interaction that provides a holistic theological interpretation. The environment of this interpretation is the Protestant tradition (Jolley 1987:2). Childs illustrates that, though historically Old Testament law was often of a different age and was transmitted from much of the narrative tradition, the canonical approach is able to exploit it in theological interaction (1985:13). The canonical shape of a given text has a theological purpose and had a theological effect (Jolley 1987:36).

From a canonical context the question of *geschichte* or *historie* is settled, because the canonical approach views history from the perspective of Israel's faith-construal, so siding with *geschichte*. *Kerygmatic* and *salvation (heils-)* history also place themselves in the *geschichte* camp, but are often accused of having a too narrow view of history. Childs goes on to advise that although different dimensions of history are freely recognized, by focusing on Israel's historical role as the bearer of the traditions of faith, these two aspects of history (*geschichte* and *historie*) are held together in a subtle balance within the shape of the canon, and should not be threatened by some overarching theory of history (1985:16). Elsewhere Childs (1964:432-449) objects to a purely historical and descriptive approach; on account of its limiting nature.

When we speak about the stabilization of the Hebrew text, it must be understood that the stabilized Hebrew text of the Jewish community was only a consonantal text. When the Hebrew text of the Jewish community reached the point of stabilization in the first century AD, the term canonical text could be applied to it. That became the normative and authoritative form of Israel's sacred scripture. (Childs 1979:98-101).

It follows that the usual text critical method, which results in each successive generation of critics offering fresh suggestions regarding the form of the original text, is highly individualistic and it seems to be unaware of the enduring role of the canonical text and its authoritative function for ongoing faith communities. Childs reminds us that the effect of taking the canon seriously is to establish the level of the biblical literature in accordance with its historical stabilization by the Jewish community, and to seek to understand this received text in the light of its historical development (1979:106). Historian, Kevin Roy admits that whether or not Jamnia was that point, does not really matter because Judaism had already formulated a consensus canon, which Jamnia would only have “rubberstamped” (Roy 2010:n.p.).

In this regard, we have to admit that the Masoretic text, though not identical with the canonical text, was indeed the vehicle for its recovery. The actual task of recovering a text close to the first century proto-Masoretic text type is supported by the Qumran manuscripts. The present Masoretic text is developed from an earlier proto-Masoretic text which extended back into the pre-stabilization period (Childs 1979:100-103). The selection of the MT as the dominant tradition by rabbinic Judaism in the first century AD did not arise from an arbitrary, academic decision, as once postulated, but was rather the culmination of a long recessional history. Its choice as the canonical text was determined often by sociological factors and internal religious conflicts, and not by scholarly textual judgments.

According to Childs (1985:23ff), canonization¹ changed profane literature into sacred by rendering it qualitatively different from its origins because it was to address future generations with the reality of God. Even though we believe that it was sacred from its origins, the point is taken that the canon cannot be divorced from the idea of revelation, and that the term “revelation” reflects the concern to be open to the theological dimensions of the biblical canon. Revelation, through

¹ Childs (1979:52) sees the first step in the process as Josiah’s reform of 621 BC, reported in 2Kg.22, and the final stage as assigned to the decisions at the Council of Jamnia (c. AD.90).

creation, wisdom, history and verbally, is seen as the means of a self-disclosing God. God is not limited to any means of revelation, and the purpose of his revelation is to make himself known and to provide salvation or redemption for his creation (taking the “Kingdom of God” as the equivalent of salvation). God revealed himself in the real events of human life; therefore revelation and history go together (Childs 1970:42). Faith is the means of apprehending revelation. Canonization was chiefly an expression of faith in the whole process. Therefore the role of theological reflection is to derive a contemporary relevance.

It is the Old Testament’s faith in God that also opens the possibility of Christian interpretation, and thus relevance to ensuing ages in Christianity who accept the canon as their own. The theological process is the only means by which the will of God may be known; it cannot come through historical or literary solutions (Childs 1985:58f). From a canonical perspective, what the text meant and what it means are inseparably linked and both belong to the task of the interpretation of the Bible as Scripture. The canonical approach takes the unity of the Bible, and the relationship between the Old Testament and the New as more than just a theoretical concern (Childs 1970:26). The New Testament itself shows an unbroken sense of continuity between the God of Israel and the God worshipped by Christians. The Old Testament is used by the Apostles with no tension to develop their Christology.

We therefore *mainly* view our texts synchronically using its canonical underpinnings. Noth (1959:18) agrees with the thinking that theology is best explicated from the “final form”. Only the canonical form of the biblical text is normative for any Biblical Theology. Synchronic biblical analysis, according to Vervenne (1994:80-98), is not very common among German biblical scholars. Their purely diachronic methodology has at times lost the given text of Scripture in its analysis (*c.f.* Otto 2007:24). The purely historical referential reading is theologically inadequate as it reorders the text diachronically and in so doing misses the Old Testament’s unique message (Childs 1985:153). Canonical study

concerns itself with doing justice to the integrity of the text itself apart from diachronistic reconstruction (Childs 1970:74). Scripture must therefore be seen as a unity, which extends to the unity of Old and New Testament; but the Old Testament comes first.

We agree with Van Zyl *et al* (1979:72) that Exodus, as with the rest of the Old Testament, is kerygmatic history, i.e. history with a message, and is therefore also theological in nature. The ancient authors sought to influence rather than purely describe life of their time (Hopkins 1994:214). Even though it is kerygmatic or preaching history, it nevertheless remains history of events that actually took place. The harmony among the Pentateuchal writings will reflect the general sequence of events as they have happened in Israel's early history. The events are not imposed in order to merely serve as encouragements for later conditions of Israel. They were, for the most, real events that happened.

Though we are influenced constantly by our Christian mindset, we will attempt to draw and present our themes, motifs and concepts from the Old Testament itself. Old Testament theology must not, however, be Christianized (Childs 1985:9). The Old Testament is a literary work in its own right and should be interpreted as such (Vervenne 1994:92). For our present purpose, we will, however, always move from the Old Testament text where Christian beliefs are evident. The lines between the Old and New Testaments will be more blurred in the areas of interpretation and application. Old Testament theology is more than the "theology of the Hebrew Bible". The theology of the Old Testament implies the larger context of the Bible of which the New Testament is the other part. For the Christian there is and always must be a relationship between the two testaments.

Because we are using a thematic approach, we are unavoidably selective to some extent. The divine presence is however a primary motif in the Old Testament and in the Bible, and here we have found Terrien very helpful in formulating our theology of presence. Since our focus is on the Book of Exodus, Terrien's so-called

“aesthetic” aspect is given up in favor of the “ethical” aspect of his dialectical dynamic presented in the historical-covenantal materials of his book. We are considering only the ethical aspects, which fall in line with our present purpose anyway. Besides, the divine presence must be seen as a dynamic principle of coherence (Terrien 1978:5).

Our ethical interest must finally be applied to society, and we believe that there is, and must be, a mutual “flow” between religion and society. God’s people are his agents in this process. We agree with Le Roux (1998:304) when he says: “Godsdiens vorm ‘n integrale deel van die samelewing. Van die antieke gemeenskap was dit besonder waar. Godsdiens was alles-bepalend...Godsdiens kan nie los van gemeenskapkragte ... gesien word nie”. In addition to Le Roux’s normal process of historical development and possibility, we accept also that divine intervention, through spiritual revival, can make speedy societal change possible. God often uses the believing community to this end. We must forever hold on to the faith that the Present God can use what he has given us to affect our current society.

We recognize that there are some debates on the date of the exodus (between 1447 and 1225 B.C) and the issue of authorship. We do not need to make a decision on these debates, as using the canonical approach means that it does not influence our conclusions in our present discussion. It suffices to say that the exodus took place during the New Kingdom period in Egypt (Pfeiffer 1992:67), and that there is evidence of redaction in the Pentateuch.

The Development of the Topic.

We will consider selected pericopes from Exodus; four under the heading of *Presence and Redemption*. Each pericope will be developed according to a standardized format, namely, Text, Translation, Exegesis, and Theological

Reflection (also reflecting on the Old and New Testaments use of the pericope). We will, therefore, first translate the text under consideration, providing translation footnotes.

Exegesis includes the tasks of identifying the *genres* or literary types; describing some relevant *structural considerations*. Structural Considerations will include discussion on the pericope limit, a text outline, and linguistic, grammatical and rhetorical characteristics. The text outline will also be the outline for our commentary. The linguistic, grammatical and rhetorical characteristics will also be used in the commentary.

The *commentary*, giving linguistic, rhetorical, geographic and narrative historical information will explain the text. It is this rhetorical, geographic and historical information that will make the text “come alive” to us. This commentary will be the fields from which our theological reflections will be harvested.

The *theological reflection* will not consider the history of exegesis because, for us, only the biblical text is authoritative. Theological reflection is our recognition that exegesis is certainly not merely a historical and literary exercise. It needs to include a hermeneutical aspect. The characteristic Evangelical hermeneutic is one which understands that the Word of God spoken to his people many years ago may still be heard by his people today (Hays 1997:219). This hermeneutic of consent (Gorman 2009:143f) gives the Bible the benefit of the doubt as a sacred text. Even though this perspective is directly at odds with the historical-critical view that theological convictions should not guide biblical interpretation, it does not just take the Bible as a historical and/or literary document but also as a source of divine revelation, witnessing to God’s creative and salvific activity and thinking about God and about the world and humanity in the light of God. The principles of divine self-revelation and the universality of the church is the basis of our theological reflection (Gorman 2009:147).

The Scripture is part of God's self-revelation to his people. Theology therefore spans the gap in time, understanding that Scripture, though it was not written *to* us, was written *for* us. Theology is the framework from which to find the link between the distant (past) biblical historical context and our present day context. A theological reflection within a canonical context and reliance upon the Holy Spirit appropriates the Bible's message as a guide also for contemporary belief and behavior within the community of faith. Theological reflection enables the people of God to recognize the *missio Dei*, or mission of God, and to become partners with God in his agenda for this world.

After having developed the section under consideration (Redemption context of Exodus), we will attempt a *Theology of the Redemptive Presence*. The Theology of the Redemptive Presence will be a summary, in a more-or-less systematic way, of all the Theological Reflections of each of the four pericopes. The reflection will have social and ethical interests too. Theology is the basis of finding the link between the distant biblical historical context and the present context.

A *Socio-ethical Understanding* for application in the contemporary Evangelical context will be derived from the Theology of the Redemptive Presence. This chapter is concerned with the application of the Exodus redemptive texts in our contemporary context. This contemporary context will not be the general context, but the context of present day Evangelicalism.

The descriptive questions of the ethical evaluation of Old Testament texts must be based upon the historical, cultural and social realities of ancient Israel. The narrative must therefore be seen as that which informs us of these realities and from which we must derive the relevant portions for our contemporary ethical application. We are helped in our selection by seeing the selection applied by the rest of the Old Testament and by the New Testament as we have witnessed in the Theological Reflections of the Exodus texts. The very selection also provides us with the synchronic and canonical dimensions in our ethical application. The

normative questions must be asked in order to bring out the contemporary significance, allowing the Exodus texts to say what it says ‘warts and all’ (Wright 2004:445), and us refraining from mere spiritualized moralizing of the text.

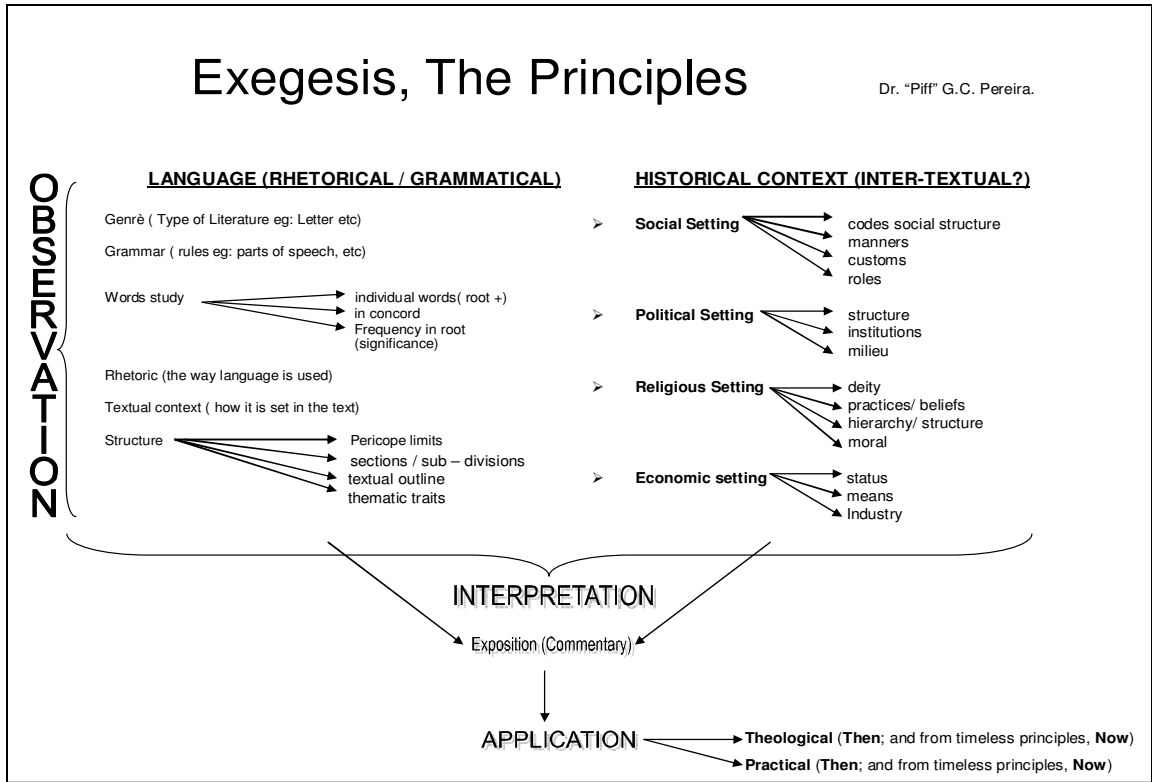
We must acknowledge that we cannot be expected to construct a comprehensive ethical response for contemporary Christian life from the Redemptive Exodus Presence narratives. It seems therefore reasonable to propose a response specifically suited for an Evangelical context, since evangelicalism characteristically emphasizes the Christian message of redemption that leads to personal faith in God as a basis for moral and ethical living. Henry (1999:4:591) reminds us that “Evangelical commitment to the new birth involves also commitment to the new society—to preservation of human justice and order, and to fuller humanization of man’s fallen life through divine renewal and reorientation”. Holy character emanates from a personal relationship with the God of the Old Testament through Jesus Christ, who instituted the New Testament. The Old and New Testaments are, for us, accepted as both authoritative and normative for ethical prescription because of the reality of God and the reality of the story of his activity for his people.

Finally, even though we dedicate much space to exegesis, our interest is mainly Old Testament Theology, seeing this theology as a historical theological discipline (Hasel 1991:195). The canonical approach best allows such a discipline. We seek to discover and describe what the text meant in its historical context, as well as what it means in our current context. The biblical text is nevertheless that upon which we base our concepts. We will try to bridge the temporal gap as well as the gap between the historical investigation and the theological one through *life-related and existential* (Le Roux 1995:185-186) categories. The biblical writers were not merely historical witnesses, but perhaps more so, theological witnesses. Our general exegetical method is summarized below, which is a summary of Robbins (1996).



Exegesis, The Principles

Dr. "Piff" G.C. Pereira.



CHAPTER 1. CATEGORIES OF PRESENCE.

1A. EXPLORING SOME OF THE SCHOLARLY DISCUSSIONS ON OUR CURRENT TOPIC

“THE APPLICATION OF THE EXODUS DIVINE-PRESENCE NARRATIVES AS A BIBLICAL SOCIO-ETHICAL PARADIGM FOR THE CONTEMPORARY REDEEMED”.

A search on the University of Pretoria’s database, under Catalogue and Sabinet, has shown that there is no completed or current research on the above topic as a whole.

ON THE TOPIC OF DIVINE PRESENCE.

On the topic of divine presence, however, there is much done. These works have greatly influenced the discussions herein.

- In the discussion on Pentateuchal concepts of the presence of God, Clements (1978) shows that God is present for his people and for his people alone. That presence is an indication of their blessedness and success among the nations. That presence was also indicative of the relationship of Israel with a holy God. God’s ineffable presence is linked with the tokens of light and fire. These at the same time affect the salvation for God’s people through the cloud and the fire of his presence. Later that presence is depicted by the *shikinah* in the sanctuary of the tabernacle. God’s presence is an indication of his approval of those to whom he appears. The presence was sought in order to worship acceptably.

- Eichrodt (1967) observed that the appearances of God are beneficent in its nature. The different forms of God’s self-revelation, or manifestation, or disclosure, have mainly a two-fold purpose; namely, its beneficence to God’s

people or its magnificence in the show of his glory. He deals in fair depth with the aspects of theophany, *kabod*, and the Name Yahweh. For him all these we are to understand, as expressions of God's presence, and those, especially the last-mentioned two, are expressions of his relationship with his people, which demanded a moral identity unique to Israel.

- Zimmerli (1976:3-13) skillfully shows the “double beginning” in relation to the main appearances of God, first to Abram, and then to Moses. The first beginning of Israel as God's People was marked by his appearance to Abram, and the second beginning by his appearance to Moses introducing himself as Yahweh. For him these appearances held significance, not only for these two men as individuals, but God showed himself as the author of the nation Israel, who bears his Name. The Name has great significance in a relationship marked by God's presence. God is also the God of Sinai, the place that gave Israel its Covenant relationship with God. Sinai is a place of God's personal presence; at which instructions for later depictions of God's presence (Tabernacle and Ark) are given. These were central to Israel's cultic and ethical response.

- Westermann (1978) focuses on the difference between epiphany and theophany as modes of Old Testament revelation of God. The former, for him, is an expression of God acting, while the latter is an expression of God speaking. These are the two main forms of God's presence expressed in the Old Testament and can be demonstrated throughout. He is however correct to show that God's speaking, especially to individuals, is not restricted to theophany. He may speak without appearance (which does not preclude God's presence in such cases) in many different ways, e.g. “God spoke to Abraham”, or through a dream as in the case of Jacob (Gen. 28.10ff) when he recognized that God was there.

- Though Brueggemann (2002) uses as his departure the text of 1Sam. 4-6, he explores the ark narratives to derive a theology of the ark. He shows a theology

of God's sovereignty in allowing himself to be "captured". This story is superimposed on the Pentateuchal understanding of the ark of the Lord. The ark of the Lord speaks of God's presence, even in the face of perceived absence. The point he makes is that God is present and working even when he is silent. God is really fighting for both his glory and for Israel's identity as his possession. This identity has to be validated, among others also, by Israel's ethical conduct.

- Terrien's (1978) work has, in the present writer's opinion, been by far the most informative on the subject of God's presence. We cannot here enumerate all the issues discussed, but we shall show some of the salient points of the book, demonstrating how it developed our own understanding.

In the cultural milieu, the Hebrews developed a unique theology of presence. They worshipped a God whose disclosure or proximity always had a certain quality of elusiveness. God was shown to be both a self-revealing and a self-concealing God. The motif of divine presence constitutes an element of religious homogeneity, which respects historical complexity without ignoring coherence and specificity. Simply said, presence explains things like covenant-importance, and not the other way around. The theology of presence is primary and other relational expressions are secondary.

The theology is often expressed in the cultus and faith of Israel. These, for the most, were translated into moral and ethical expression (the holiness code). Also, the cultus and faith of Israel provides the points of continuity into the New Testament. We shall further explore in this research the possibility of the extended continuity into our current situation. The rite and the ideology of covenant are dependant upon the prior reality of presence. The goal of Hebraic worship is to remember and to anticipate the time of divine encounter. The essence of cultic and faith categories is to celebrate the moment, either past or future, of the divine manifestation or proximity and to express their holy identity.

The divine nearness in the Old Testament was often linked to a few elite individuals. What sort of access did the average Israelite have to the presence of God? He believed in the real presence of God at the shrine during the celebrations of the cultic feasts and he expected the final epiphany of history when Yahweh will at last bring creation to fulfillment. Here, the author speaks of a cultic presence. The Deuteronomic law opened with a cultic rehearsal of those memories, in which the motif of covenant is subordinated to the story of theophanic presence (Deut.5.2-4). Having said this, we must not forget about the redemptive presence (the pillar of cloud and fire) experienced by the whole people.

The author then demonstrates aspects of theophany, the disclosure of Glory, divine speech, epiphanic visitation, Sinai and other disclosures, and the importance of hearing in the formation of the People of God. Presence is that which creates a People. Presence is the reality to which man attunes himself if he is to live. The Hebraic notion of “people-hood” is represented in their history of the divine presence.

God’s presence is defined in terms of the theologoumenon of the Name and of God’s goodness, not of the Glory. Presence is the begetter of theology (which includes ethics), but theology defines that presence. This is demonstrated in the story where Moses expresses a desire “to know” God. The ways of God are the signs of his purpose and represent his creative will. What Moses really wants to know, are God’s ways. In this manner the divine presence is linked with knowledge about God. God in fact does not promise absolute knowledge, but rather his presence (Ex. 33.14). The people-hood of Israel was in this unique relationship. Without the divine presence, this relationship does not exist.

- Fretheim (1984) brings out the idea of “intensification” of the presence. That God promises to be with the recipient beyond the time and place of his appearance to them (e.g. Gen.26.24, Gen.18.15, etc.). That is why we have the concepts of “forsakenness”, “departure”, etc. in the Old Testament. God’s presence in the

created order of time and space is concurrent with these intensifications. These intensifications are experienced relationally as God's "nearness" or "distance". There are three forms of intensifications, namely:

Theophany – God's accompanying presence with his people in their journeying expressed in the Name, cloud/fire, his face and messengers.

Cultus – God's tabernacle-ing presence as he dwells among his people. The ark of the Lord is included in this understanding of presence.

Glory – This is God's unapproachable presence. The people cannot approach God's presence and therefore need the representation of Moses.

This whole idea of intensification is demonstrated by the different understanding of God's transcendence and his immanence.

- Reflecting on the Sinai pericope (Ex.19 – Num.10.10), Schmidt (1983) notes that Sinai is presented as the mountain of God. Here God is presented as both transcendent (Elohism) and as immanent (Yahwism). The different names for the mountain depict origin – "Sinai" (J,P), the "mount of God" (E), and "Horeb" (D). For the people the relationship with God is mainly audible and not visible. That relationship of the people with God carries on through the prophets ultimately to the incarnation of the Word.
- The central idea of Zimmerli's (1982) work is that Revelation is the voice of none other than God. The self-presentation of God does not depend upon, or is derived from any religious property or historical circumstance, but on the disclosure of his personal Name, Yahweh. Yahweh has no other disclosure to make other than his own person, and his person in its hidden-ness is disclosed to his people only as he chooses to disclose it. So do we come to an understanding of God that is appropriate to Yahweh and distinctive to Israel. The disclosure of Yahweh's personal Name, a name containing full richness and honor of the One naming himself. In the self-disclosures, God refers to himself in two ways: the long form, "I am Yahweh your God" and the short form, "I am Yahweh", where the

paraenetic statements seem to prefer the longer form. Our particular interest in terms of ethical importance lies here. The shorter form is normally enriched by the addition of a divine deed in the past.

1B. THE CATEGORIES OF DIVINE PRESENCE – IN GENERAL.

The presence of God is expressed in many ways in the Old Testament in general, and in the Book of Exodus in particular. We have to briefly discuss the general Old Testament understanding of divine presence before we look specifically at Exodus, as this understanding was reflected in Israel's theology of presence, and in turn this theology influenced the New Testament's theology, where the Trinitarian God came in personal form. The Old Testament expresses the presence of God in many different ways, such as theophany, epiphany, divine speech, visions, dreams, emblems or symbols and other manifestations. Theophany seems to include most of these anyway. This is perhaps the best place for us to start.

1C. THE CATEGORIES EXPLORED.

The Book of Exodus is unique in some ways. Here we have the appearances of God happening in "public" as it were. Not only Moses was privy to the presence of God, but the Israelites and the Egyptians were witnesses of the appearances of God. While on the one hand the Egyptians did not quite acknowledge God's presence they finally gave in to it by acknowledging that it served the benefit of the Israelites. The Israelites on the other hand were constantly aware of that terrorizing presence. With fear and wonder mingled they acknowledged it as a saving presence. They alone seemed to have benefited from it. Fretheim (1984:60) speaks of the divine presence as "there-ness". God was continuously present, but with various intensifications.

Moses seemed to have special access to the presence of God. There were times when only he could go before God. When the elders and Aaron were invited into

the presence, they never went without Moses. There were times when Yahweh invited an audience with Moses, and there were times when Moses seemed to have entered God's presence "at will" as mediator of the people (*cf.* Ex.5:22-6:12). Whenever Moses entered the presence, he was visually aware of the presence, but he perceived no fixed shape or form. Whoever entered the presence knew that it could not be entered flippantly because the presence was actually dangerous to life. There came a time when the Israelites, for fear, refused to go into the presence of God. They rather wanted to have Moses as their representative before God (Ex.20:18-19).

The presence of God in Exodus always did three things, namely, i) it authenticated the identity and commands of Yahweh as their God, ii) it authenticated Yahweh's representative, Moses, as his servant, and iii) it authenticated the present program of Yahweh with respect to his people, Israel. The people had to know that Yahweh was their God and that they were his people. This was the essence of the covenant between Yahweh and Israel. That knowledge, together with the Covenant made for an ethical response to the presence of God. The text reminds us that God is willing and yearning to be present, but that presence requires a community of faith and obedience (Breuggemann 1994:685). It was the presence that created peoplehood.

The ineffable presence of God conveys the essential concept about the being of God. Light and fire play an important role in demonstrating something of the power and transcendence of God (Clements 1978:56). His glory is characterized simply as gleaming light. The glory of God is the expression of his holiness, power and transcendence. From the point of view of revelation the glory of God, however, is always 'veiled' and thus never a depiction of its full extent. From the point of human perception the divine majesty can only be imperfectly grasped by human sense and therefore descriptions of his glorious appearances will always be lacking (Eichrodt 1967:19).

The destiny of the Book and of the people is depicted in the ending of Exodus, with the construction of the tabernacle and God's descent to dwell among the people.

The journey of God in Exodus is also notable. God is hardly present at the beginning of the book, but at the end God has moved down from his distant abode at the top of the mountain to become an intense presence in the very midst of the community of faith, even though they are a persistently disloyal people (Fretheim 2003:249-254).

1C.1. Theophany.

Theophany is derived from Greek words that mean the *appearance of God* or the manifestation of deity. It literally 'was seen' or 'showed itself' (Terrien 1978:107f.) Significant events in the life of Israel have been marked by the appearances of God. While the other ancient peoples created statues and other representations of their deities, Israel were strictly forbidden to represent Yahweh in any physical form (Ex.20:4). Theophanies were acts of God. There were no theophanies unless God was willing to appear in whatever form he chose. Rooker (2003:859) calls it God's self-disclosure. These are temporary manifestations of God. Ryken (1998:857) reminds us that the Hebrews valued even more the verbal descriptions of the encounters with their God they found in their Scriptures. When God appears in theophanies he limits himself to specific and particular forms within the context of the creation he has made.

The Old Testament describes a number of theophanic incidents. We cannot always tell the form of the divine appearance as in some cases God simply appears in relationship to man. In Genesis for example God appears to man in the Garden of Eden. God appears in that way to Abram and Jacob too. Sometimes God is personified in the forces of nature (e.g. Ps.18:13-14; Hab.3:9-12). Loud divine speech is an indication of God's presence. Earthquakes, fire, lightning, storm, wind, smoke and cloud often mark these descriptions of God (Ryken 1998:857).

Some theologians exclude the category of dreams from the list of theophanies. According to Rooker (2003:860), theophanies broadly include (1) a direct message, (2) a message in a dream, (3) a message in a vision, (4) a message by

an angel, (5) a message by an angel in a dream. It includes any manner in which God chooses to reveal himself. He continues to say that the heightened forms of natural phenomena, like the pillars of cloud and fire were understood to be sense-perceptible representations of God's presence. The variety of ways in which God reveals himself is an indication of his freedom. Westermann (1978:25) distinguishes between theophany and epiphany as follows: A theophany belongs to God's speaking. Epiphany belongs to God acting. Epiphany has the same meaning as coming, and God could also come for judgment.

The more dramatic appearances of God are associated with Moses, Job, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah and Ezekiel. They experienced these dramatic appearances of God. Theophanies are often associated with the calling or commissioning of individuals. Isaiah, for example, describes his commissioning in such terms (Is. 6:1-9). The verbal content that goes with these appearances is what is important and the appearance itself only serves to validate the commission.

Fretheim (1984:82) remarks that the appearances of God are for the most spontaneous and effective. God may appear in any place and at any time. He is never manipulated to appear. This is so because of the freedom of God. Humans on the other hand may have perceived it as regularized and expected (e.g. Lev.9:4-6). The appearance of God in any case made a difference – whether to quell fear, to evoke worship, or to improve relationship – by increasing knowledge about God's worth, will, words and works.

There are instances where the purpose of theophany is to depict the glory of God. That glory often expresses selected attributes of the One appearing. These include the show of his power; or his inapproachability; or his uniqueness. It always indicates the fundamental truth; that God is supernatural in every sense, and the language used describes him in such terms. We must not forget that the language used to describe God, even in theophanic terms, is often clothed with anthropomorphisms. While theophanic language in Israel was reserved for Yahweh, it was fairly common for the surrounding nations to use such language for favored monarchs.

By his holiness God is different and distinct from his creation, but is not limited by the distinction. Rooker (2003:860) mentions the important fact, that the non-occurrence of God's appearing in the form of an animal in the Old Testament is related to the avoidance of any association of Israelite worship with paganism. This absolute bar on the idea of God becoming visible in animal form was further supported by the fact that divinization of the animal world exerted no influence on the relation conceived to exist between Yahweh and nature (Eichrodt 1967:23). This distinction is also in part related to Israel's call to be holy, distinct from the world and the surrounding nations.

The different Old Testament writers portray the appearances of God in various and yet remarkably similar ways. Sometimes God appeared as a man, sometimes as or in the person of 'the angel of the Lord'. The angel of the Lord almost always appears as a beneficent power for the people. He was Yahweh's provision for guidance and protection. This and other appearances, though they reveal God, have to conceal him also. A theophany is God's way of appearing in a somewhat concealed way. The theophany is always less than who he really is. There is a danger for the one who gazes on God's appearance; therefore theophanies are really veiled appearances for man's benefit. Concealment is related to the idea of God's holiness. Rooker calls this the *survival motif* (2003:861). In Exodus such concealment often took the form of a thick dark cloud.

The prevalent characteristic of all theophanies is that they are initiated by God himself. They exist to reveal God's plan/s. Another common characteristic is that they are always temporary. They are always transient manifestations related to their purpose. Another characteristic is that God imparted holiness to the location of the theophany for the duration of its appearance. The Lord's presence makes the place holy but that holiness departs when God departs from the designated place. The place is holy for as long as God is there. God appeared at locations in the natural environment such as springs, rivers, trees, but predominantly at mountains. The speech of God is often accompanied with sounds such as the

thunderous “voice” or trumpet blasts and earth-shaking disturbances. (Rooker 2003:862).

Humans always responded with fear and terror to theophanies. The terrorizing appearances of God explain why God was often cloaked in a cloud in the theophanic appearance: the full revelation of his glory would totally overwhelm and could in fact destroy the human onlooker (Rooker 2003:863). We therefore disagree with Erickson (1991:268) when he alludes to the spirituality of God in order to spiritualize theophanies. We believe they were also physical realities as is indicated by the attending sounds and disturbances referred to earlier. We can agree with Schmidt (1983:42) with some modification when he says: “In theophany ... God is not visible, but only audible and traceable in the effects of his appearance”, if the traceability refers to the form of the appearance of God. In other words, it is not really God who was seen, but only a form in which he chose to show himself. One can in any case not deny the personal and immediate presence of God.

We must now turn our concern to theophany in the Book of Exodus. The first occurrence is *the burning bush* with the call of Moses at ‘the mountain of God’ (Ex.3:1-4:17). God speaks from the midst of the burning bush. The theophany is called “the angel of the Lord” (3:2). In verse 4 it is God himself present in the midst of the bush. The location was made holy by the presence and Moses hid his face. When God’s presence departed, that space once again became common ground (Hartley 2003:421). Yes, finally Moses communed with God ‘face to face’ and had to cover his face to hide the transferred glory that shone from his face (Ex. 34:29ff.). If one thinks of theophany as happening in two parts, a visible element and a speech element, then the former functioned in this instance as something to get Moses’ attention (Breuggemann 1994:712).

Terrien (1978:120) posits that the heart of the Book of Exodus (Ex.19:1-24:18) represents the only story of “theophany” in the strict sense of the word. There is firstly the nature in tumult, and secondly the participation of the people stands as a witness to the solitary man of God. It insists on hearing sounds and depicting the

presence in terms of visibility. Israel could not become a priestly realm and a holy nation without hearing God's words. Presence is the root of people-hood.

The *pillars of cloud and fire* (Ex. 14, etc.) were theophanic manifestations. God led his people in these pillars. These were two different pillars when it led the people. The pillar of cloud led the people during the day and the pillar of fire led them during the night. When God defended his people these pillars seemed to have become one, a pillar of cloud and fire standing between the camp of the Israelites and the camp of the Egyptians. The side of the pillar facing the Egyptians brought darkness to that camp, while the side that faced the Israelites brought light, so that the Israelites could travel by day and night. The holy God often manifested his presence as a glowing brightness comparable to a fire (Hartley 2003:421). Out of the pillar God viewed the happenings (Ex.14:24) and spoke (Ex.16:10-12). The pillar was present with the Israelites to the end of the Book of Exodus when finally it sanctified the tabernacle.

At Sinai God descended on the mount in a majestic display. There was *lightning* and *thunder* and the *blast of a horn* as a *thick cloud* hung over the mountain (Ex.19:6ff.). There was fire, and smoke ascended from the mountain. Here the image of God's presence in theophany is portrayed together with the veiling (the thick cloud) for the protection of the people from God's consuming holiness. So the people were filled with both terror and fascination before a spectacular revelation of God's holiness (Hartley 2003:422). What differentiates the Ten Commandments from other forms of the Law is that they were given directly by God. They were uniquely written on two stone tablets by 'the finger of God' (Ex.31:18), and the lawgiving was accompanied by a dramatic theophany (Selman 2003:501). An example is found in that the mountain shook with the presence of God. It was actually these attending disturbances that evoked fear in the people. They understood the holiness of God and its effects through these disturbances.

There is often reference made to *the glory* in the Book of Exodus (e.g. Ex.40:34-35). The glory must include an element of appearance, of that which catches the eye. Glory (*kabod*) is the radiance which proceeds from Yahweh whenever he

appears. It is depicted as a glory of great intensity. The glory was too great for the people. On a few occasions the glory was so powerfully present that the people were overwhelmed. “The appearance of the glory of Yahweh was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the sons of Israel” (Ex.24:17).

Moses’ request for a vision of the glory (Ex.33:18-22) was an expression of his quest to secure his relationship with Yahweh. There is an indirect refusal since he is only allowed to see the goodness, which anticipated the grace of Yahweh. The immediate glory will be seen, but veiled, by the showing of his back rather than his face. (Terrien 1978:143). This too was in anticipation of grace. After Moses anointed the tabernacle, the glory descended with such power that not even Moses could enter the tent of meeting. Yet, on one occasion Moses was permitted to behold God’s glory, albeit that that glory had to be ‘veiled’ in some way (Ex.33:18-23). It was impossible for any human to look directly at God and live. This powerful manifestation of God’s glory communicated to the Israelites the power, dignity and splendor of God’s holiness (Hartley 2003:422).

So far we have seen that theophany is the main descriptor of the presence of God. It consists of the visible part; and it is accompanied by a verbal part. The verbal part is properly called divine speech. This speech functions in different ways in the Book of Exodus.

1C.2 Divine Speech.

Divine speech is when God speaks. It is also called theologoumena. God is not silent, nor severed from his people. He “heard”, he “remembered”, he “saw” and he “knew”. The groans of his people he took as addressed to him. His hearing caused the remembrance of his covenant, which in turn made him look upon their suffering. God finally “comes down” and communicates that he knows their situation and tells them his plans for them according to the covenant. Divine speech is a form of revelation. Poythress (1986:252) puts it that all of God’s

speech is referential in character. In all of what God says, he is bringing us to know him and his world.

In the call narrative, the speech of God contains three elements. i) There is the sovereign summons which requires the response of those addressed. Divine speech addresses real people and real situations. ii) There is the commanding voice that asserts an awesome limit, caused by the fact of his holiness. The elusiveness of God's presence is such because it has to be veiled for the hearers' benefit. God does not want to destroy them. iii) There is the self-identification of the speaker. God makes himself known to his people. Zimmerli (1982:xv) expresses our understanding well: Yahweh has no other disclosure to make other than his own person, and his person in its hidden-ness is disclosed only as he chooses to disclose it. He also makes his plans known to them.

Divine speech has *creative* ability. Besides the fact that all creation came into being by divine speech, divine speech is also able to create *relationship* between God and man. God gave *his name* by means of divine speech. He reiterates his *covenant* with Israel by divine speech. He *recounts his deeds* on Israel's behalf by divine speech. He makes his *promises* and gives *assurances* by divine speech. He makes his *pronouncements* and *judgments* by divine speech. He enters into *dialogue* with man. His *discourse* reveals his person and his plans.

Divine speech happens both in private and in "public". There were times when God spoke to Moses alone. There were times when he spoke in the congregation's hearing. An occasion when God spoke directly to the people was when he proclaimed to them the Ten Commandments (Ex.19:16-17 and 20:1ff.) They begged that Moses rather speaks to them (Ex.20:19). It was the visible part of the theophany that terrified the people. Westermann (1978:25) makes the remark that theophany belongs to God's speaking. Theophany always introduces divine speech. There are texts where nothing is said about an appearance. God often spoke without a visible form.

In the patriarchal stories there are a multiplicity of places, like Shechem, Mamre, Beersheba, Moriah, Bethel and Penuel, where God appears and speaks. In the Exodus narratives God speaks at a single place, *the mountain of God and its immediate vicinity*. The patriarchs erected shrines where God spoke to them. In Exodus *no shrines* were erected anywhere. There are no wonders that accompany God's appearance to the patriarchs. In Exodus there were often *wonders* that went with it (Terrien 1978:107). Hebraic theophany was *more heard than seen*. There is a desire for the presence, but not for visibility. Sight is submitted to hearing (Terrien 1978:110). Eichrodt (1967:21) reminds us that Israel heard the voice of God at Horeb without seeing any form (Dt.4:12-18).

We may talk of dialogical speech, where God is in *dialogue* with man. When God revealed his Name, it was within a context of dialogue. Moses asked Yahweh what he should answer when they asked who sent him. The answer was the disclosure of the divine name. Dialogue was true only for Moses. Only he spoke to God and often does so as the mediator of the people.

Here we are not thinking of divine speech in a way we think of the inspiration of Scripture. The people and Moses literally heard the words of Yahweh. The hearing of the divine will is stressed in the Sinai theophany. They heard in 'grammar and syntax' language. They are sometimes directly compared with speech from one human being to another (Ex.20:19), and in terms of what they already know about God and his purposes (Ex.20:2, 11), but the people are listening to God (Poythress 1986:250). It was not some transcendental communication. Yet, there are times when the divine speech within a narrative "fills the gap" with the word about faith (e.g. Num.20:12), giving the story a sense far larger than that of its own immediate concern (Sailhamer 1991:259). This kind of direct speech was recorded in a form understood as "thus says the Lord".

Moses met and spoke regularly with God at the Tent of Meeting (Ex.29:42). This took place in such a dramatic form that all who saw it recognized the holiness of the experience and responded in worship (Ex.33:9). Moses could hear the voice of God from "between the cherubim" (Num.7:89) (Merrill 1998:109). Moses was

tasked with the duty of passing on this heavenly word to the people (Dt.5:5). The speech of God was always meant to have an effect beyond the messenger, and in this instance, Moses.

Merrill (1998:109) goes on to say: When Moses was given the task of passing on the word, the divine speech was understood as *a corpus of “commands”, “decrees” and “laws”* designed to guide the nation in its task of being a priestly kingdom and holy nation (Dt.6:1). Moses is God’s prophet, to speak on his behalf to the people; but also the people’s priest, to represent them before God. Whether as prophet or as priest, Moses had the privilege of direct communion with God.

1C.3 Symbols – Tabernacle and Ark of the Covenant.

Presence created people-hood and God desired to be present with Israel. Their identity as God’s people was demonstrated by the fact that God was present with them. That presence showed God’s favor on them and was reciprocated by their being holy unto the Lord. Yahweh’s presence while they journeyed was particularly associated with two cultic objects, namely the Tabernacle and the Ark (Zimmerli 1978:48). The people’s holiness was possible only through their cultic expression. Their cultic expression was inextricably bound to the symbols of presence which in turn confirmed their people-hood. The symbols of presence are preeminently vested in the Tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark and the Tabernacle result from an act of generosity and concern by a holy God, vehicles by which he not only meets his people but also reveals himself to them. All divine revelation by nature accommodates the Creator to a form less than himself (Fleming 2003:679). Terrien (1978:26) reminds us that Hebraic worship is to remember and anticipate the time of the divine encounter. These two objects functioned exactly in that way during their worship of the present God.

The Tabernacle.

When Israel was in Egypt, God saw their plight and “came down” (Ex.3:8) to bring about their deliverance. God came down to identify with his people. His presence was with his people during their time of suffering, and it was there when he rescued them. His presence overcame their enemies. His presence was with them in their travel towards the land of promise. At Sinai the people experienced the formalization of their relationship with Yahweh and by that became a nation that was covenanted to Yahweh. The single most important fact in the experience of this new nation of Israel was that God came to “tabernacle” or dwell in their midst (Kaiser 1978:119). The tabernacle sanctuary was the Lord’s tented dwelling in the midst of Israel. Now the triad of God’s intention was complete; Yahweh was their God, they were his people, and his dwelling was among them.

For almost one year the people stayed at Sinai and constructed the tabernacle in accordance with the Lord’s instructions (Ex.25-40). On the day the tabernacle was completed and erected, Yahweh promptly occupied the tabernacle in his glory (Ex.40) and from that point forward had his continuous presence among the people. It was manifested as a guiding and protecting presence in the form of a cloud by day with fire in it by night over the tabernacle (Averbeck 2003a:807). We are able to observe that the God who was scarcely present in the beginning of the story drew nearer during the unfolding until he was resident at the end.

The dwelling of Yahweh among his people was known by three terms, namely, “tabernacle”, “sanctuary” and “tent of meeting”. The word for tabernacle (*miškān*) has the idea of “dwelling place” and speaks about the immanence of God. He now dwells among his people. The Lord’s transcendence is only really understood when it is held in relationship to the immanence, and vice versa (Averbeck 2003a:809). As the sanctuary (*miqdāš*) it had the idea of holiness. It has the graded concept of holiness in that there is the ‘holy place’ and ‘the most holy’ place (holy of holies). The whole tabernacle was called the “sanctuary”, while the most holy place was referred to as the “inner sanctuary” (Unger 1985:1060). Only the High Priest was allowed to enter the sanctuary after consecrating himself in the prescribed way.

The tent of meeting (*ōhel mō'ēd*) emphasizes the tabernacle's function as the place of "meeting" between God and his people. This is the exclusive name used in the section Ex.27:20 – 33:7 and the focus is on cultic function. The tent of meeting would become the place of God's glory.

The tabernacle was meant to be *moveable* from the start. Like with the Israelite dwellings, this was a moveable dwelling place for Yahweh in his travels with his people on their way to the Promised Land. Israel's religion was not attached to any sacred place, such as Sinai or Jerusalem. The sanctuary existed for life on the move. All the key artifacts of the tabernacle shrine were portable in all its practical terms. Also, a formal staff was appointed for its service and rites. This was surprising as such appointments existed in their contemporary setting only for fixed temples and shrines. With Israel, God does not visit their neighborhoods, but he joins them in search for a whole new home (Fleming 2003:674f).

The staff that was appointed and dedicated to the tabernacle was from the tribe of Levi. They were generally referred to as the priests. In the hierarchy of priesthood there were those who were appointed to the moving of the shrine. There were those who were appointed for cultic services. Then there was the High Priest appointed from the family of Aaron to serve cultic-ly in the Holy of Holies. Those set aside to be priests were placed in a special state of holiness that allowed them access to the "dwelling" of God (Duke 2003:652). Moses passed on the priestly function to Aaron so that there would be a separation between the leadership of the people and the leadership of worship. Fleming (2003:675) states that Israel's religious life with the tabernacle excludes the political ruler to a remarkable degree.

The sanctification of the tabernacle and priests was necessary if they were to accommodate the presence of God. In a special ceremony Moses anointed the tabernacle, its furnishings and the priests. After the anointing, the divine glory descended on the tabernacle, confirming the anointing (Ex.40:34-35; Lev.8) and showing that God's presence was there making the tabernacle tent of meeting a holy place and the priesthood holy.

There was another “tent of meeting” pitched outside the camp. It is first mentioned in Ex.33:7-11. This is where Moses received oracular revelations before and after the Tabernacle was completed. The tabernacle would however serve as both a cultic and an oracular tent. The Lord would meet at the tabernacle not only with Moses but with all the Israelites (Ex.29:42f). So also with the tent outside the camp; the Lord would go there (Ex.33:7-9). Averbek (2003a:811) comments that it was not entirely clear how the oracular functions of the two tents varied, but it can be said that there were no regular cultic functions performed at the outside tent. There was nevertheless a continuing manifestation of the Lord’s personal presence at the outside tent of meeting (Ex.33). The outside tent did not provide a “permanent” residence for the Lord. On the other hand we are told that the congregation assembled at the entrance of the tabernacle tent of meeting to witness the consecration procedures for the priests.

The tabernacle and its furnishings and utensils were constructed strictly according to God’s instructions. We shall not here look at the details with respect to the dimensions and furnishings / utensils. We shall only consider aspects as they pertain to the facilitation of the divine presence. We know of the Outer Court, of the Holy Place and of the Most Holy Place. The actual tabernacle consisted only of the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place. The presence of God was chiefly linked with the Holy of Holies (most holy place).

A curtain between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies separated the two compartments. This curtain is spoken of as a “veil” (*pārōket*) (Ex.26:31-35). Behind the veil was the Most Holy Place, a cubicle with the length, width and height of equal dimensions (10 cubits; approx. 15 feet or 4,6 meters). The Ark of the Covenant (also called *The Ark of the Testimony* – Ex.25:10-16) was placed in the Holy of Holies. Only the High Priest could enter behind the veil once a year on the Day of Atonement. The presence of God was behind the veil. We cannot help but again notice the *survival motif* related to the presence.

The Holy Place functioned as the place for daily offerings. Of particular note in this area was the Table of Presence and the Lampstand (Ex.25:23-40). These two

furnishings were a constant impression of the daily presence of God. The former contained the Bread of Presence (12 loaves) with frankincense which were changed every Sabbath Day. The lampstand not only shed light in the Holy Place, but was lit every day. The combination of the daily lighting of the lampstand and associated burning of incense plus the bread constantly on the table impresses one with the fact that the Lord had truly taken up residence in the tabernacle (Averbeck 2003a:815).

The cultic activities in the tabernacle were opportunities for divine encounter, and the essence of the ancient feasts was to celebrate the moment of the divine manifestation and proximity. To use Terrien's (1978:26) words, here "... there was the recollection and the hope of the presence mediated to the rank and file of the people and transmitted to the posterity from generation to generation". They believed in the real presence of Yahweh at the shrine during the celebrations of the feasts. This was the cultic mode of presence.

God provided for the people's need of his presence by entering both space and time to be with them there in the varying intensities of their experience and to meet their need for the specific, the tangible, the personal and the articulate (Fretheim 1984:62). Israel's life of worship could not afford to be careless of times and places. Provisions were made for those moments and places of worship within their culture. With the tabernacle this presence and cultus were focused to a particular place in their midst; a place that God chose. It also showed that God's presence among his people was an act of grace.

The dual idea of transcendence and immanence is brought together in the tabernacle. God has promised his presence and accessibility to his people, but they cannot make that presence their possession; the tabernacle told the Israelites that God is available and his presence is real. "I will dwell among the people of Israel, and will be their God" (Ex.29:45). God's Name was present at the sanctuary (Dt.12:5f) demonstrating the covenant relationship at its highest realization.

The Lord would be present with Moses and Israel all the way from Egypt to Mount Sinai, and from Sinai to the Promised Land. From Sinai to the Promised Land the presence would reside in the Tabernacle. The tabernacle was therefore, a sort of moveable Sinai. The purpose for building the tabernacle was to provide a place for the Lord to dwell among them, even after they left Sinai (Averbeck 2003a:824). In Exodus the continuity in the symbolism of that presence is to be found in the pillar of cloud. In this way the glory was constantly with them and was meant to instill the fear of the Lord. The fear of the Lord did not last long, for less than two months later they had already severely violated the Lord's presence and his other basic commands in the golden calf debacle (Ex.32) (Averbeck 2003a:823).

The Ark of the Covenant.

Motyer (1985:168) is correct in saying that at the very center of this whole divinely dedicated religion was the Ark. Everything pointed to it. The Ark was one of the furnishings of the Tabernacle. It was to be placed in the Most Holy Place of the Tabernacle. Of all the furnishings, this was the most important and most holy. In it were deposited the two stone tablets upon which "the finger of God" wrote his Ten Words. The Ten Commandments were the terms of God's covenant with the people of Israel. Besides it being called the 'Ark of the Covenant' (Num.10:33; Dt.31:26), it is also called the 'Ark of the Testimony' (Ex.25:16, 22) and the 'Ark of God' (1Sa.3:3, 4:11). It is often understood as the throne of the divine presence (Unger 1985:88). It was a symbol of the Lord's presence.

The Ark of the Testimony compares with the roughly contemporary shrine and funerary furniture of King Tutankhamun (c. 1350 B.C.) which has been used to guide the graphic interpretation of the biblical text (Barker 1985:126). From Exodus 25 we know that it was a chest made of acacia wood with approximate dimensions of 1,1meters long and 0,7meters wide and high. It was overlaid with pure gold, both inside and out. It had a lid of pure gold which had two cherubim facing each other and looking down and with their wings spread. The Ark had to be carried by the priests with two poles that were put through four gold rings fixed to the Ark.

The lid covering the Ark, especially the space between the two cherubim, is traditionally known as the “mercy seat” or as the “atonement seat” (*kappōret*). It was believed to mark the place of the Lord’s “enthronement” in his earthly kingdom (e.g. 2Sa.6:2; Ps.99:1). This also is the place that the Lord appointed to meet with his people (Ex.25:22). It is the place where the sacrificial blood was sprinkled on the Day of Atonement.

According to Leviticus 16:2, the Lord said to Moses, “I will appear in the cloud over the atonement seat”, so he was to make clear to Aaron that the High Priest must not enter there except once a year on the Day of Atonement. With regards to Moses, however, the Lord would “meet” with Moses there and “speak” to him all the commandments so that he could deliver them to the Israelites (Ex.25:22). Kaiser remarks that the Ark of the Covenant of God with its mercy seat, or place of atonement, overspread by the two cherubim was the most intimate of all the expressions of God’s nearness to his people (1978:120).

Terrien (1978:163f) tells us that in the Mosaic times the Ark was a military emblem, symbol, or token of the nearness of Yahweh in battle. It belonged originally to the idea of holy war. Theophanies never lasted long and the prohibition of images created a problem for the worshippers of Yahweh. The people did not fully grasp the concepts of nearness and of omnipresence that the Ark became the object to hold on to in the face of existential crises such as warfare. The Ark was a concrete center for those who did not experience the nearness in the same way as Moses did. It cannot be said that the Ark was understood by the Hebrews as the permanent container or shelter of the divine presence. It was rather a pedestal or stool from which Yahweh ascended before battle or to which he descended after victory (*c.f.* Num.10:33ff). The popular mind would easily tend to look at the Ark as the bearer of real presence at all times, but fragments of the tradition which have been preserved insist on the transitory character of this presence, since it was limited to periods of migration and times of battle.

In spite of the believed presence of God, victory in war was not guaranteed. This is clearly seen from the story in 1 Samuel 4-6 when Israel was defeated by the Philistines and the Ark taken captive. To be sure, the Ark speaks of the presence of God, but this particular Ark narrative speaks of God's glory. His glory is never devoid of his sovereignty. Breuggemann (2002) in his book shows that God allowed himself to be "captured" by being present with the Ark in order to show he is victorious over other gods. So, while Israel may suffer defeat, Yahweh always comes out victorious because his presence is also his glory.

It is interesting that Deuteronomy speaks of the Ark but it never speaks of the tabernacle. In later narratives prior to the Temple we always hear about the movement of the Ark alone. Fleming observes that these stories mention the Ark as if it had long been detached from the tabernacle. In the history from Joshua through Kings, the Ark plays an active role only in the stories of its movement into God's new home, first in its approach to the land as a whole (Jos.3 – 4:6) and then through the events that dislodge it from Shiloh and lead it to Jerusalem (1Sa.4 – 6; 2Sa.6). The tabernacle is never mentioned in connection with any of these events. (2003:676). With respect to the presence then, it must follow that the Ark was of greater importance than the tabernacle, and that the presence was a reality in the tabernacle because it housed the Ark. Put differently, the tabernacle found its significance in housing the Ark. The tabernacle, however, was necessary for cultic practices; at least, until the temple became the center of worship.

Fleming (2003:678) raises another important truth, namely that ...

... Although the Ark is not a direct part of the Decalogue, it offers a concrete expression on the ban on images of God found there, and by this it gives us some idea of what that ban really involved. On one hand, the Ark maintains the standard ancient Near Eastern framework for intimate encounter with deity, where the god makes himself or herself present in a single point, in order to enter active communion with those who serve the deity. The normal form for the physical vehicle of revelation and exchange is an image, whether human or of some other symbol. ... The Ark commanded through Moses is also new to Israel, likewise replacing among other things the simple stones of the type used by Jacob at Bethel (Gen.28:18-22). On the other hand, instead of illuminating God by an image, the Ark does so by a frame without a picture. The cherubim are heavenly beings, protective spirits often portrayed with mixed forms, such as the "living things" of

Ezekiel 1:5. In the Near East these beings would have been classed as divine, and the cherubim offer one hint that God still keeps company in heaven, though that company is not to be worshiped

Finally, the cherubim on the lid of the Ark of the Covenant had their wings stretched out towards the center of the Ark, overshadowing it. Their faces turned downward toward the lid itself, probably to avoid facing God, who was present above them (Ex.25:22). In this worshipful pose the cherubim provided a place above which God would be present to speak with Moses. (Steinmann 2003:113). It would appear that the cherubim were associated with God's presence. They adorned his throne above and the tabernacle where he dwelt among the Israelites.

All these truths above have to be applied to our texts in Exodus.

1D. THE RATIONALE OF CHOOSING THE DIVINE-PRESENCE NARRATIVE PERICOPES IN THE BOOK OF EXODUS.

The presence narrative pericopes in Exodus are those which narrate incidents when people were able to move into or experience, what the biblical author describes as the presence of Yahweh. They also include those pericopes where Yahweh personally presents himself to human beings. There are many such passages, but we will limit ourselves to what we call the primary presence pericopes.

These so-called primary presence pericopes are derived from sections in Exodus that we broadly classify under redemption (chapters 3 – 18), covenant (chapters 19 – 31) and national-identity (chapters 31 – 40) narratives. We have identified ten such narrative pericopes, but we will only consider those from the redemption section in the book. These are the ones we have selected to look at in greater detail. These are what we will translate from the Hebrew text, and then comment on having done an exegesis using the canonical approach and a socio-rhetorical hermeneutic method of interpretation. Thereafter, we hope to derive paraenetic and ethical aspects from these narratives, in order to demonstrate the importance

of the Exodus presence narratives for a biblical socio-ethical theology for our contemporary context.

We believe that God wanted to do among his people what only he could do. This would entrench in their minds the recognition that he alone is God. It would bring glory to him. On their part, they were expected to do what demonstrated this recognition, namely to obey God. God's action and their obedience were mediated and motivated by the presence of God. The presence encouraged willing obedience; and willing obedience positioned their ethical paradigm, which was to be expressed within the community.

Biblical theology must rest on the biblical text. It is for this reason that much space will be dedicated to the task of exegesis. The Exodus primary presence pericopes are:

A. The Exodus Narratives of Presence and Redemption.

1. Ex. 3:1–4:17;
2. Ex. 5:22–6:13;
3. Ex. 13:17–14:31;
4. Ex. 19:1–25.

B. The Exodus Narratives of Presence and Covenant.

1. Ex. 20:1–20:21;
2. Ex. 24:1–18;
3. Ex. 29:42–46;

C. The Exodus Narratives of Presence and Identity.

1. Ex. 32:1-16;
2. Ex. 32:30-34:11a;
3. Ex. 34:27-35;
4. Ex. 40:34-38.

We shall only consider the Exodus narratives of Presence and Redemption in our endeavour to propose a socio-ethical understanding for the redeemed community as it applies to their society.

CHAPTER 2.

THE EXODUS NARRATIVES OF PRESENCE AND REDEMPTION.

2 A. THE CONCERNED GOD IS PRESENT, AND INTRODUCES HIMSELF.

Though the children of Israel had not yet seen themselves as a nation, they knew that they were a people who belonged together because they had the same roots, and that they were different to the other nations because of those roots. They had as their forebears' names of men who had a personal relationship with God. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were men who had a special covenant with God. The promises of God to these forebears also applied to them in some way.

There has been a longstanding consensus that covenant is a prominent concept in the Old Testament. Others have even seen it as the center of Old Testament theology (Odendaal 1989: 143-151), and they are correct to say that covenant theology proves, on closer examination, to hold the key to a question that has occupied the attention of Old Testament scholars: the question of the distinctiveness of Israel's religious faith. Their very political paradigm has been transformed into a religious metaphor giving expression to a unique relationship between Yahweh and his people. By covenant the bond between Yahweh and his people is guarded from degenerating into a natural physical union. But at the same time his people stand in a most intimate relationship to him of knowing him in a real personal way (p.146–147).

While man in general is the concern in the Primal biblical history (Gen.1-11), in the Patriarchal history with Abraham and later, Yahweh's concern is with individuals through whom he may provide salvation. The process of salvation operates in and through individuals whose very lives become the medium of accomplishment of the divine intention (Yarchin 1980:172). This time that individual is Moses for the benefit of Israel, the people of God and the offspring of Abraham.

Besides their roots-identity, the exodus (salvation) from Egypt would become the foundational marker to their nationhood. Their relationship with Yahweh is marked by the exodus. Whenever Yahweh relates to them, he reminds them that he is the God who took them from the hand of the Egyptians. He is the one who took them by the hand and led them out of Egypt. He is the God who redeemed them with a mighty hand. In the light of this, Yahweh can speak of himself as *being their God* and them *being his People*. This clause would become the core covenant phrase in this relationship. This core covenant phrase also expresses itself throughout the Bible, and finally includes also those who are in Jesus Christ. This core covenant is by no means a minor aspect of the programme of God and of the relationship he is to have with his people. Maybe, a list of the appearance of this core covenant in the Bible is appropriate, showing it as a central motif in God's programme in this world - Gen.17:8; Ex.29:45; Jer.24:7; Jer.31:33; Jer.32:38; Ez.11:20; Ez.14:11; Ez.34:24; Ez.37:23, 27; 2Co.6:16; Heb.8:10 and Rev.21:3.

Certainly, this covenant clause already found itself in their forebears' vocabulary when God made a covenant with Abraham, and when he promised: *The whole land of Canaan, where you are now an alien, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God* (Gen.17:8). The formula developed more completely, expressing the relationship in the statement, *I will be your God and you will be my people*. We do not mean to indicate a unilateral action as might be emphasized in this formula (van den Eynde 1999:124), but that the relationship and action is indeed reciprocal. This relationship became even more meaningful when God later revealed his name to them as his people. His name in many ways would clarify his own attributes, his redemptive activity and his relationship with them. To know God's name, is to know him and to know his character. If they were to identify with God as his people, they would have to emulate his character.

Yahweh was a God who was for them and with them. The fact that he was with them actually became the proof that he was for them. When God later gives them his laws, telling them how he is to be worshiped, he introduces it with the reminder that he is with them, and for them, because he has redeemed them. As being with

them and for them, God reveals profound insights about himself to them. Moses' and Miriam's (their) song acknowledged that there is no one like the Lord; *he is majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders* (Ex.15:11).

The theology of redemption is strongly emphasized. The most suitable biblical term for God's purpose with his creation is 'salvation' or 'redemption'. The redemption relationship includes salvation, the sealing of the covenant, and above all, his presence with them. While we see the Law as part of the covenant relationship, Breuggemann (1994:680) separates them only to see a convergence of what he recognizes as the four main themes of Exodus, namely, Liberation, Law, Covenant and Presence. He continues to say that we do well to recognize that this narrative is of a peculiar genre, a vehicle for the appearance of God's presence, God's first presence in the exodus narrative (1994:711). By his presence with them and through the covenant, they discovered his attributes of justice, truthfulness, mercy, faithfulness and holiness. If they were to be for him as he is for them, they would have to reflect these same attributes to the other nations. This relationship certainly had ethical significance. The foundation of biblical ethics and morality is laid out first in the character of Yahweh as revealed in the exodus itself and in the Book of the Covenant (Ex.20:22 – 23:33).

True worship was to glorify Yahweh by accepting his salvation, obeying his covenant and acknowledging his presence. His presence with them was first mediated through Moses, then through various theophanies, and finally through the tabernacle. The omnipotent, unchanging and transcendent God of the universe was with them. His gracious nearness showed that he was not only mighty on their behalf, but that he was also present in their midst. His presence made all the difference for them and their on-lookers, whether friend or foe!

Moses tried to be the mediator for this slave-people by defending a Hebrew man against his Egyptian overlord. His mediation was rejected by the retort, "...who made you ruler and judge over us?" (Ex.2:14). As his people were exiled in Egypt, Moses found himself exiled in Midian. What both Moses and the Israelites did not realize, was that their exile and enslavement contrasted with the free movement

that God promised them to have in their own land (van den Eynde 1999:136). Before God was going to meet with his exiled people, God first had to meet with the exiled man who now understood where his people were at.

God heard the groaning of the Israelites, and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them. God's man, Moses was in training for what God wanted him to do. Moses was called from tending the flock of his father-in-law to be the shepherd of God's people. The presence of God was the place at which Moses was appointed over God's people.

Ex.3:1-4:17 records the first encounter that Moses had with Yahweh. It is a narrative of theophany, it is a narrative of call, and it is a narrative of sending. The theophany happens in two parts, namely, the *visible* element which evokes the response of covering, and the *speech* element which evokes some boldness on Moses' part. In this encounter Yahweh called him to be the deliverer of his people from the hand of Pharaoh. The call and the sending of Moses constitute his commissioning by God. Moses tries to get out of this commissioning, but God provides answers to all his excuses. Moses was God's man in the remedy of the Israelite situation, and Aaron was to be his helper. We shall now consider this text.

Exodus 3:1 – 4:17.

1. Translation:

3:1 Now Moses was shepherding the flock of Jethrow, his father-in-law, a priest in Midian, and he led the flock² along the west side³ of the desert and came to Horeb⁴, the mountain of God.

² The idea here refers to small animals with the emphasis on sheep and goats. It has the idea of a flock consisting of the staple animals, providing milk, food and wool.

- 2 Then the Angel of the Yahweh⁵ appeared⁶ to him in fire coming from within⁷ a thorny⁸ bush. When he inspected it, behold, he saw⁹ that the bush, though it was burning, was not being consumed.
- 3 So Moses said to himself¹⁰, “Turn aside now, and go and inspect this marvelous spectacle to see why the bush does not burn up”.
- 4 When the Yahweh saw that he had turned aside to look, God called to him from within the bush and said, “Moses, Moses!”. Then he answered, “Here I am”.
- 5 And God said, “Do not come near here. Take your footwear off your feet, because the place you are standing upon is holy ground.”¹¹
- 6 Then he said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob”. Then Moses concealed his face¹² because he was afraid to look at God.
- 7 Then Yahweh said, “I have surely seen the oppression of my people in Egypt; and I have heard their cry in the presence¹³ of their oppressors, and I know¹⁴ their anguish”.
- 8 And I have come down¹⁵ to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them out of that land into a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the habitation¹⁶ of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites.
- 9 And now, see, the cry of the sons of Israel has come to me, and indeed, I have seen the oppression with which the Egyptians are oppressing them.
- 10 So now, go, I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people¹⁷, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt.
- 11 Then Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and also that I should bring with me the sons of Israel out of Egypt?”
- 12 And he said, “Surely, I will be with you. This will be the sign to you that it is I who sent you. When you have brought all the people out of Egypt, together you will worship God at¹⁸ this mountain.”

³ Literally, “the behind-side or the far-side” (that is in relation to the rising of the sun and the location of Midian).

⁴ The name, Horeb, literally means, “waste-land” or “desert”. It is another name for Mount Sinai, where Moses received the Law from God.

⁵ Elsewhere “LORD” may be a translation of the tetragrammaton.

⁶ The Niphal verb here could be expressed in the reflexive, “showed himself”.

⁷ Literally, “the midst”

⁸ The unused root of **הִסְתִּיב** means “to prick”, thus “thorny bush”

⁹ Being an interjection-particle, it more accurately translates, “behold!” or “look!”

¹⁰ That is to say in his heart.

¹¹ The verse ends with a 3ms pronoun, **לוֹ** (to him), which would imply that the ground was to be considered holy by Moses.

¹² The Hiphil of the verb, to conceal, may have a double causative (to have two objects; either or both). So Moses could have concealed God from his sight.

¹³ Literally, “Before the faces”

¹⁴ God is in close proximity with their pain.

¹⁵ Literally, “from above to the earth”

¹⁶ The word, **אֵל-מִקְוֵה** can also be translated “stronghold”

¹⁷ **אֶת-עַמִּי** has the connotation of a king. Yahweh presents himself as the King of Israel.

¹⁸ Literally, “on” or “upon”

- 13 And Moses said to God, “Behold, if I go to the sons of Israel and say, ‘the God of your fathers has sent me to you’, and they ask me, ‘what is his name?’ What shall I say to them?”
- 14 Then God said to Moses, “I am that I am”¹⁹. And then he said, “This is what you are to say to the sons of Israel, ‘I am has sent me to you.’”
- 15 And again God said to Moses, “This is what you must say to the sons of Israel, ‘Yahweh²⁰, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you’. This is my name forever and it will be to my remembrance from generation to generation.”
- 16 “Go and assemble the elders of Israel and say to them, ‘Yahweh, the God of your fathers, has appeared to me.’ The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob says, ‘I have seen²¹ and have taken stock of what was done to you in Egypt.’”
- 17 “Therefore I have declared that I²² will bring you out of your misery in Egypt to the land of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites; to a land flowing with milk and honey.”
- 18 “Then, when the elders had heard your message²³, go with the elders²⁴ of Israel to the king of Egypt and say to him, ‘Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews²⁵, met with us. So now, please let us go a journey of three days into the desert and offer a sacrifice to Yahweh, our God.’”
- 19 “But I know that the king of Egypt will not give in to you. He will not let you go, until by my mighty hand *he does*²⁶”
- 20 “Then I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt²⁷ with all my performing²⁸ wonders which I will do in his midst. Then after this, he will send you away.”
- 21 “And for this people, I will put favor in the eyes of the Egyptians, and when you go they²⁹ will surely not let you leave empty-handed.”
- 22 “So, every woman must ask from her female neighbor and other women in her house for articles of silver, and articles of gold, and clothing which you will put on your sons and on your daughters. So will you strip the Egyptians.”
- 4:1** Moses answered, and he said, “What if they do not believe me or listen to me, and say, ‘Yahweh did not appear to you.’?”

¹⁹ Or, “I will be what/who I will be”

²⁰ Here, the tetragrammaton is used as a proper name, even though in some translations it is used as a title “Lord” connected with the definite article.

²¹ The two words פָּקַדְתִּי פָּקַד used together, has the effect of, “seeing, I have noticed”, or, “counting, I have taken stock”

²² Though אֲנִי is not translated, the effect is one of personal connection denoting close proximity.

²³ Literally, “your voice”

²⁴ It also has reference to the chiefs, leaders or prominent ones of the people.

²⁵ This is a use often to distinguish them from the other nations. An ethnic group connected to Abraham, a stranger from the Euphrates area. Hebrew means, “one from beyond”.

²⁶ “he does” is added.

²⁷ We have selected the singular “Egypt” (rather than “Egyptians”) to facilitate for the singular בְּקִרְבּוֹ “in his midst”

²⁸ The Niphal participle necessitates “my performing wonders”; otherwise it can be translated, “my judging” in which case the plural nuance might be missed.

²⁹ The verb יִרְיֶה is Qal perfect 3rd person singular, but a plural translation is unavoidable.

- 2 And Yahweh said to him, “What is that in your hand?” And he answered, “A staff.”
- 3 And he, *Yahweh*³⁰, said, “Throw it³⁰ to the ground.” And he threw it³⁰ to the ground, and it³⁰ became a snake. And Moses fled from its³¹ presence³².
- 4 Then Yahweh said to Moses, “Put³³ out your hand and take hold of its tail.” And he put out his hand and took hold of it³⁰, and it³⁰ became a staff in his hand.
- 5 “This,” *the Lord said*³⁴, “is so that they will believe that I, Yahweh, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, have appeared to you.”
- 6 And Yahweh said to him again, “Please put your hand into your bosom.” And he put his hand into his cloak, and when he took it out, behold, his hand being³⁵ leprous, was like snow.
- 7 And he said, “Return your hand into your cloak.” He returned his hand into his cloak, and when he brought it out from his cloak; here, it was as before; like *the rest of*³⁶ his flesh.
- 8 “Then if it is that they do not believe you, nor pay attention to the first sign, they will believe the next sign.”
- 9 “And if it happens they also do not believe the second of these signs, nor heed your voice, you shall take from the waters of the Nile and pour it out on dry ground, and the waters you took from the Nile, shall become blood on the dry ground.”
- 10 And Moses said to Yahweh, “Please my Lord, I am not a man of words, nor have I ever been before and after you spoke to your servant. Indeed, I am heavy³⁷ of mouth and slow³⁶ of tongue.”
- 11 Then Yahweh said to him, “Who gave man his mouth, or who makes him *to be*³⁸ mute, or deaf, or sighted or blind? Is it not I, Yahweh?”
- 12 “So, go now and I myself will be with your mouth. I will instruct you what you must speak.”
- 13 Then *Moses*³⁹ said, “Please Lord; please send whoever else you will send.”
- 14 Then Yahweh became very angry⁴⁰ with Moses and said, “Why not your brother Aaron, the Levite? I know that surely he can speak well⁴¹. Besides⁴², see he is coming out to meet you; and he will rejoice in his heart when he sees you.”

³⁰ Implied. Not in the Hebrew text.

³¹ These are really in the masculine.

³² This noun is in the masculine plural.

³³ Actually, “send out”

³⁴ Implied. Not in the Hebrew text.

³⁵ The verb, *מְצַרְעֵת*, as a Pual participle requires this translation.

³⁶ Implied.

³⁷ *כָּבֵד* is more often translated “heavy” (11 times), rather than “slow” (twice)

³⁸ Added

³⁹ Implied. Not in the Hebrew text.

⁴⁰ The Hebrew literally says, “the nose of Yahweh became hot”

⁴¹ The verb “speak” is repeated to give this effect.

⁴² Or “also”

- 15 “And you shall speak to him and place words in his mouth. And I myself will be with your mouth and with his mouth, and I will instruct you (both) what to do.”
- 16 “And he will speak to the people for you, and it shall happen that he shall be as your mouth, and you shall be as his god.”
- 17 “And you must take this staff in your hand, so that you can do signs with it.”

2. **Exegesis:**

Exodus contains the most fundamental and sublime revelations of God regarding his nature and will, and describes the beginnings of the theocratic constitution of the Israelitic people and the foundations of its ethics, law, customs, and worship. God as revealed in Exodus is not a new, hitherto unknown God: He is the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob – the fathers of the people – who has protected them and has been worshiped by them. (Hirsch, Jacob and Driver 2007:5).

In relation to this text, it is of importance to Jewish and Christian groups, and within all Christian denominations it is accepted as a story of importance, and there is not much disagreement theologically. Its theological applications may have varied foci, from evangelical to liberationist. God uses his power for moral purposes in order to establish law and liberty in the world, by destroying the wicked and saving the oppressed (3:8), in whose hands are given judgment and salvation. (Hirsch, Jacob & Driver 2007:5).

Now, we shall do an exegesis, looking first at the issue of genre; then, at some structural issues of this pericope; and finally, by providing a fairly comprehensive commentary on this text. We shall then do a theological reflection on the present text from which we will later derive ethical principles for application in our dissertation.

2.1 Genré.

It may be said that the literary typing of this text is generally classified as *narrative*. It certainly sets out to recount the story of Moses' call to deliver the Israelites. The story tells us that Moses was really unwilling to be Israel's deliverer, but that he finally gives in to the promise that Yahweh, the God of his forefathers, will be with him. This promise, however, does not completely satisfy him. So Yahweh also provides the presence of Aaron. This is more accurately a call-narrative which becomes paradigmatic in Israel's history.

The story this narrative sets out to recount is regarded, more accurately, as a *traditional* story. Even if one may not hold the source theories posited by critical scholarship, it is to be regarded as a traditional story because it becomes that in the subsequent religious and historical identity of the Israelites.

Furthermore, this traditional story is about Yahweh, the protagonist, and Moses, his agent, as the heroic characters about to save the Israelites from the cruel oppression of their Egyptian overlords and Pharaoh, the antagonist. Any long heroic story is also called a *saga*, and so we classify this story as *saga*.

This saga is told in *prose* format, in that it is written without rhyme or meter. It includes no poetic sections in the Hebrew text, and there is no particular aesthetic linguistic structure noticeable either. Many constructions have been made of thematic structures though.

2.2 Structural Considerations.

In the intellectual discourse arena, this text, as with the exodus event, has varied responses from the Historical-critical camp. Some see an accurate historiography, while others not. These two camps and everything in-between are expressed in other disciplines such as Source-, Form- and Textual criticism on the one hand, and archeology on the other hand. We agree with P.J. van Dyk's conclusions that

the Documentary Hypothesis is seriously questioned as an explanation for the origin of the Pentateuch and that important Yahwist materials should be re-dated. He goes on to say that the bastions of Pentateuch Criticism have fallen from grace or are currently seriously undermined. We cannot simply accept the Documentary Hypothesis as a working hypothesis, and neither can we speak with certainty about the dating of the different Pentateuchal layers. (1990:198f). We therefore are intent on discussing this text, and later texts in our research, purely as the final or matured text accepted by the Israelite religious community.

Whatever the process of formation of this text was, we shall consider only the biblical tradition in its final form. In taking this approach, we are seeking to do justice to the fact that the faith of Israel, in its drive toward verbal and literary expression, displayed restlessness with every preliminary form until it came to rest in the form of the text as we have it. (Janzen 1979:230). In Kruger's words, the canon as the canon is the outcome of social (and religio-political) conflict, insisting on a certain settlement of the conflict (1995:251). Rendtorff (1989:386) cites Childs, saying, The Old Testament texts in their present form are theological by nature. The final canonical literature reflects a long history of development in which the received tradition was selected, transmitted and shaped by hundreds of decisions ... resist easy diachronic reconstructions which fracture the witness of the whole. We deliberately adopt a synchronic reading of the text. While the diachronic reading may have its value, it often disregards the literary unity of the canonical text.

While there is considerable disagreement among commentators on fixing the limits of this section, with respect to the beginning and the end of the unit (Childs 1974:51), we need to state at the outset that Exodus 3:1 - 4:17 cannot be further subdivided without affecting its theological message. That it may be regarded by some as a secondary unit in terms of the history of traditions or as a literary interpolation (Noth), and whether or not it can be proven that there is an original literary connection between 2:23a and 4:19, it has to be accepted that this pericope is a well established unit. There has been more unity in the present text than has been generally recognized.

Certainly, the unit can be extended to 6:1 (e.g. Driver), or somewhere in-between, but the majority of commentators prefer to divide between the commission of Moses and the first encounter with Pharaoh. Fretheim recognizes a re-statement of the call narrative in Ex.6:2-7:7 (1991:51). Some of the difficulty in determining the end of the section stems from the secondary expansion in 4:21ff. Since it does not contribute to our particular purpose, we shall not here deal with the problem of sources, which can result in the undue atomization of the text. We therefore agree with Bāntsch and Childs (1974:52) in ending the commission section at 4:17, especially since it is widely accepted that 4:18 – 31 serves as a transition moving Moses back from Midian to Egypt (Breuggemann 1994:717).

Canonically, this can be seen as a paradigmatic call narrative. There are striking parallels with later call narratives (Jg.6, Jer.1, 1Kg.22 and Is.6) and it confirms a stereotyped structure. Our present text is, however, a greatly expanded form of the basic call narrative. This call includes the giving of a sign (3:12) and it has a prophetic commission making use of local tradition, and thus the setting is not mythological. Besides, the tradition of the holy place of the burning bush in the wilderness has now entered the Israelite tradition to give a concrete background to the story of Moses' first encounter with God (Noth 1959:39).

The unity of our text is demonstrated by the clustering of strategic verbs, and the recurrence of certain phrases showing a thematic unity. These will be demonstrated below. The extended dialogue between Yahweh and Moses further demonstrates the unity of the text.

2.2.1 Text Outline.

- a) 3:1 – 6. Yahweh appears to Moses.
- i) 1 – 4 Yahweh appears in the burning bush.
 - ii) 5 – 6 Yahweh introduces himself
- b) 3: 7 – 10. Yahweh commissions Moses.
- i) 7 – 9 Yahweh intervenes for Israel
 - ii) 10 Yahweh sends Moses
- c) 3: 11 – 22. Yahweh answers Moses and gives him a message.
- i) 11 – 12 Moses' first objection and Yahweh's answer.
 - ii) 13 – 15 Moses' second objection and Yahweh's answer.
 - iii) 16 – 22 Moses given a message for the Elders.
- d) 4: 1 – 9. Yahweh answers Moses and gives him signs.
- i) 1 – 5 Yahweh answers Moses' third objection with a sign.
 - ii) 6 – 9 Yahweh gives Moses two more signs.
- e) 4: 10 – 17. Yahweh answers Moses and gives him a helper.
- i) 10 – 12 Yahweh answers Moses' fourth objection.
 - ii) 13 – 17 Yahweh answers Moses' final objection with a helper.

2.2.2 Linguistic, Grammatical and Rhetorical Characteristics.

2.2.2.1 Important Recurring Verbs (by stem)

<i>Stem</i>	<i>Meaning</i>	<i>Occurrences</i>	<i>Verse</i>	<i>Translated as</i>
ראה	see	12	3:2	<i>appeared</i> and <i>he saw</i>
			3:3	<i>inspect</i> and <i>saw</i>
			3:4	<i>saw</i> and <i>to see</i>
			3:7	<i>surely</i> ⁴³ and <i>I have seen</i>
			3:9	<i>I have seen</i>
			3:16	<i>appeared</i>
			4:1	<i>appear</i>
			4:5	<i>appeared</i>
			4:14	<i>sees</i>

⁴³ The duplication of the verb in this context functions as emphasis, hence “surely”

<i>Stem</i>	<i>Meaning</i>	<i>Occurrences</i>	<i>Verse</i>	<i>Translated as</i>
שלח	send	11	3:10	<i>I am sending</i>
			3:12	<i>I sent</i>
			3:13	<i>has sent me</i>
			3:14	<i>has sent me</i>
			3:15	<i>has sent me</i>
			3:20	<i>I will stretch out⁴⁴ and he will send</i>
			4:4	<i>put out⁴⁵ (twice)</i>
4:13	<i>you send (twice)</i>			
הלך	go	8	3:10	<i>go</i>
			3:11	<i>I should go</i>
			3:16	<i>Go</i>
			3:18	<i>let us go</i>
			3:19	<i>to go</i>
			3:21	<i>you go and you leave</i>
			4:12	<i>go</i>
יצא	bring out	6	3:10	<i>to bring</i>
			3:11	<i>I should bring</i>
			3:12	<i>You have brought</i>
			4:6	<i>he took out</i>
			4:7	<i>he brought out</i>
			4:14	<i>is coming</i>
שמע	hear	5	3:7	<i>I have heard</i>
			3:18	<i>had heard</i>
			4:1	<i>listen</i>
			4:8	<i>pay attention</i>
			4:9	<i>heed</i>
אמן	believe	5	4:1	<i>they...believe me</i>
			4:5	<i>they will believe</i>
			4:8	<i>they...believe and they will believe</i>
			4:9	<i>they...believe</i>
ידע	know	3	3:7	<i>I know</i>
			3:19	<i>I know</i>
			4:14	<i>I know</i>

⁴⁴ This could be translated “send out”

⁴⁵ This could be translated “send out”, meaning “reach out”

<i>Stem</i>	<i>Meaning</i>	<i>Occurrences</i>	<i>Verse</i>	<i>Translated as</i>
שׂים	place	4	3:22 4:11 4:15	<i>you shall put on gave and makes you shall...place</i>
דבר	speak	6	4:10 4:12 4:14 4:15 4:16	<i>you spoke you must speak surely⁴⁶ and he can speak you shall speak he will speak</i>
לקח	take	3	4:9 4:17	<i>you shall take and you took you must take</i>

2.2.2.2 Important Recurring Nouns (by stem)

While there are obviously other important recurring nouns in our text, we shall here list only those we wish to emphasize later in our commentary.

<i>Stem</i>	<i>Meaning</i>	<i>Occurrences</i>	<i>Verse</i>	<i>Translated as</i>
סָּנָה	bush	5	3:2 3:3 3:4	<i>thorny bush, it⁴⁷ and bush bush bush</i>
פָּנָה	face	3	3:6 3:7 4:3	<i>face in the presence its presence</i>
עַם	people	5	3:7 3:10 3:12 3:21 4:16	<i>my people my people the people this people the people</i>

⁴⁶ The duplication of the verb in this context functions as emphasis, hence “surely”

⁴⁷ We simply referred to the bush as “it”

<i>Stem</i>	<i>Meaning</i>	<i>Occurrences</i>	<i>Verse</i>	<i>Translated as</i>
יָד	hand	13	3:8	<i>hand</i>
			3:19	<i>by my...hand</i>
			3:20	<i>my hand</i>
			4:2	<i>in your hand</i>
			4:4	<i>your hand and his hand⁴⁸</i>
			4:6	<i>your hand and his hand (twice)</i>
			4:7	<i>your hand and his hand</i>
			4:13	<i>whoever else⁴⁹</i>
			4:17	<i>your hand</i>
אֶרֶץ	land	7	3:8	<i>out of (that) land & to a land (twice)</i>
			3:17	<i>(to the) land and to a land</i>
			4:3	<i>the ground (twice)</i>
אוֹת	sign	5	3:12	<i>the sign</i>
			4:8	<i>the... sign (twice)</i>
			4:9	<i>(these) signs</i>
			4:17	<i>signs</i>
בְּנֵי	son	7	3:9	<i>the sons</i>
			3:10	<i>the sons</i>
			3:11	<i>the sons</i>
			3:13	<i>the sons</i>
			3:14	<i>the sons</i>
			3:15	<i>the sons</i>
			3:22	<i>your sons</i>
אָב	(fore-) father	5	3:6	<i>your father</i>
			3:13	<i>your fathers</i>
			3:15	<i>your fathers</i>
			3:16	<i>your fathers</i>
			4:5	<i>their fathers</i>
שֵׁם	name	3	3:13	<i>his name</i>
			3:15	<i>my name</i>
			4:11	<i>gave⁵⁰</i>

⁴⁸ בְּכַףּוֹ is also translated “hand” in this verse. It is different from יָד , which could also mean “finger”.

⁴⁹ Literally “by the hand”

⁵⁰ Literally “named”



<i>Stem</i>	<i>Meaning</i>	<i>Occurrences</i>	<i>Verse</i>	<i>Translated as</i>
קָרַב	midst	2	3:5 3:20	<i>near</i> ⁵¹ <i>in his midst</i>
מָטָה	staff	3	4:2 4:4 4:17	<i>a staff</i> <i>(to) a staff</i> <i>(this) staff</i>
חֵיק	cloak	5	4:6 4:7	<i>your bosom and your cloak</i> <i>your cloak and his cloak (twice)</i>
פֶּה	mouth	7	4:10 4:11 4:12 4:15 4:16	<i>(heavy of) mouth</i> <i>his mouth</i> <i>(with) your mouth</i> <i>in his mouth; your mouth and his mouth.</i> <i>your mouth</i>
עֶבֶד	servant	2	3:12 4:10	<i>you will worship</i> ⁵² <i>your servant</i>
אֲדֹנָי	lord	2	4:10 4:13	<i>my Lord</i> <i>Lord</i>

⁵¹ Literally “in the midst”

⁵² Literally “serve”

2.2.2.3 *I Am / I will* Progression.

3:2	Moses	Here <i>I am</i>
3:6	Yahweh	<i>I am</i> the God ...
3:10	Yahweh	<i>I am</i> sending you
3:11	Moses	Who <i>am I</i>
3:12	Yahweh	<i>I will</i> be with you
3:14	Yahweh	<i>I am</i> that <i>I am</i> (<i>I will</i> be whom <i>I will</i> be)
	Yahweh	<i>I am</i> has sent you
3:17	Yahweh	<i>I will</i> bring you out
3:20	Yahweh	<i>I will</i> stretch out my hand
	Yahweh	<i>I will</i> do this
3:21	Yahweh	<i>I will</i> put favor...eyes
4:10	Moses	<i>I am</i> not a man of words
	Moses	<i>I am</i> heavy of mouth
4:12	Yahweh	<i>I will</i> be with your mouth
	Yahweh	<i>I will</i> instruct you
4:15	Yahweh	<i>I will</i> be with your mouth
	Yahweh	<i>I will</i> instruct you

As a rhetorical device, it is undeniable with the progression demonstrated above, that the Name of Yahweh operates for the certain and successful future of his people. We notice that only Yahweh uses the '*I will*' statement. This makes a strong case for 3:14 to be translated as *I will be whom I will be*. Furthermore, Yahweh's statements, on the one hand, are expressions of his strength. Moses' *I am* statements, on the other hand, are expressions of his weakness. It is because of Moses' statements of weakness that Yahweh's *I will* statements are meaningful. The people's future depends upon their confidence in Yahweh's future.

2.2.2.4 Observable Thematic Progression.

3: 2	appeared*		
	inspected		
	saw		
3	inspect		
	to see		
4	saw**		
7	surely seen**, heard, know		
8		hand (Egyptians)	
9	see		
	seen**		
16	appeared*		
	seen**		
	taken stock**		
17			
18	met with us*		
19		mighty hand**	
20		my hand**	
21	in the eyes		
4: 1	not appear*		
2		your hand	
4		your hand	
		his hand	
		his hand	
5	appeared*		
6		your hand	
		his hand	
		his hand	
7		your hand	
		his hand	
10			not a man of words
			you spoke**
			heavy of mouth
			slow of tongue
11	sighted		gave...mouth
			makes...mute**
12			with your mouth**
			instruct...must speak**
14	he sees		surely he can speak well
15			you... speak to him
			place words in his mouth
			with your mouth**
			with his mouth**
16			he will speak to...people
			he...as your mouth
17		your hand	

* with reference to the theophany

** Yahweh's action / attribute.

2.3 Commentary.

There had been over four hundred years of silence, since God last appeared to anyone; and in that instance it was to Jacob (Gen.46). Then it was to confirm the relationship with Jacob, who was now the recipient of God's covenant promises previously given to his grand-father, Abraham. But now, God was going to appear to Moses. God has decided to reveal to him that he was going to rescue the Israelites, who had Jacob as their ancestor, from the hands of the oppressive Egyptians. Moses is the man God had chosen to lead his people out of slavery. Moses, who had been trained in leading another's flock, was now going to lead the flock of God. Mackay rightly asserts that this is no sudden impulse on the part of God. He prepared Moses for just such a time as this. (2001:64). It is reasonable to conclude with Fretheim that Moses' call is portrayed in terms of a prophetic paradigm. Moses is called to be a messenger of the word of God; canonically, he is the first such person to be so called (1991:51). The aspect of the verbal involvement of Moses is emphasized by the repeated use of the word "mouth" and its cognates as reflected in the thematic progression above.

There is an almost unspoken contest between Yahweh and Pharaoh, and Yahweh was going to free the Israelites by his mighty hand. He was to snatch his people from the hand of their oppressive overlord. While God prepared Moses for this project, Moses is really caught unprepared when God calls him. This chapter marks a decisive turning point in Moses' life story. He is called upon to change from his fugitive mentality to one of confrontation. The Israelites living in Egypt are oppressed by forced labor, imposed upon them by a new Pharaoh who did not know Joseph, and who desired to destroy them (Hirsch, Jacob & Driver 2007:1). Egypt, who was once life-supporting to Joseph's people, has now become life-threatening to them (Janzen 1979:232). Again, the rhetorical use of the oft-repeated concept, "hand", shows that Moses too, as God's messenger, applies his own hand on Yahweh's behalf in this contest with Pharaoh.

Moses' earlier attempts to deliver Israel had failed. Because Moses had already tried to intervene on behalf of the Israelites, he knows their situation, he knows

himself, he knows the Israelites, and he knows the power of Egypt (Janzen 1979:234). Having experienced that failure, and having his knowledge, he was willing to rather lead a quiet married life. He was quite happy tending his father-in-law's sheep; even after forty years since he fled from Egypt. While he was content with the well-being of Jethro's flock, Yahweh was concerned with the well-being of his own flock, the children of Jacob. Jacob was the one with whom Yahweh confirmed his covenant which he had with Abraham when he appeared to him. Of course, the patriarchal experience is not the only instance of divine self-disclosure in the history of Israel; it was soon to be superseded by the appearance to Moses, God's servant. (Nünberger 1993:6). Yahweh has an on-going commitment to his people.

On the one hand Pharaoh seems to be a completely free character who is 'asked' to set the Israelite slaves free. In this case God, as a character in the story, leaves Pharaoh room for his own decisions. Yahweh knows that Pharaoh is the kind of person who will be stubborn and will not let the people go unless compelled to. Only when God has worked wonders will Pharaoh let them go (Fretheim 1991:66) God aims with his powerful deeds to impress Pharaoh to such an extent that he will in the end let the people free. By this strong action God wants Pharaoh, who says he does not know Yahweh and sees no compulsion to do what he says, to finally acknowledge him when he sets the slaves free. (Deist 1989:38-39).

So then, the social situation has to be transformed from oppression to freedom. Breuggemann (1994:678-9) is enormously helpful by recognizing that the social transformation of revolutionary proportion is wrought through the holy intentionality of a "new God", whose name is only known in and through this wondrous happening. God has revealed himself as being full of holy zeal against wickedness – a zeal, however, which is counteracted by the immeasurably greater power of his love, mercy, and forgiveness, for these are inexhaustible (Hirsch, Jacob & Driver 2007:6). Yahweh's zeal is that which distinguishes him from the other gods. The uniqueness of Yahweh, over against the gods, centres in his dealing with his creation in a new creative way. He is able to save. The limitations set on a god in the ancient Near East do not apply to Yahweh (Kruger 1995:252).

This God has appeared, and through theophany he will show that his covenant is grounded in authority. Theophany is taken as most plausible (for granted). The authority is really the confirmation that under-girds his covenant with his people, and the relationship that comes through the covenant, requires the freed slaves to organize under the Law. Their identity will finally be characterized by Yahweh's presence. He promises this presence first to Moses, and it later becomes the traveling assurance to the people. So, Davis is correct in saying that the emphasis of this text is on revelational matters relating to the divine presence, perfection and protection as expressed within God's covenant faithfulness (1972:39). It is this passage where God reveals who he is to Moses and the significance of his character for the Israelites in their present situation (Petersen 2007:2). Yahweh's appearance to Moses impresses both on his life and on those he comes into contact with thereafter. Again, it can be noticed how the concept of sight (with over eighteen allusions) is used as a rhetorical device in our text. Moses' enquiry forces him to look at a burning bush in the same way that Yahweh took close notice of Israel's suffering, and to the point of "coming down" to experience it with them.

a) Ex. 3:1 – 6. Yahweh Appears to Moses.

Moses found himself hosted by three different nations so far during his lifetime. Now, he finds himself living in Midian for the last forty years of his life. His wife was Midianite. He was born into the nation Israel from Israelite parents, Amran and Jochebed (Ex.6:20; Num.26:59), of the tribe of Levi. He was the younger brother of Aaron (Ex.4:14; 7:1-2,7) and of Miriam (Num.26:59). He was brought up in Egypt by the daughter of Pharaoh. She gave him his name.

From Egyptian etymology Moses had the meaning of "drawn out". In Hebrew the proper name has the meaning "drawer out" or "he who draws out". One cannot but notice that his name had mimetic significance. He was going to be the one whom God uses to draw the Israelites out of their difficulty. Having said so, we should not

deny the historicity by suggesting that a story rose as an etiology of a name, i.e. the story was fabricated to answer the query, “Why was he named Moses?”

Moses is here in the wilderness. The wilderness is that “outlaw” region beyond the reach of Egypt’s organized power where Moses may find fugitive asylum (Janzen 1979:233). It is a formless wasteland, and is best depicted by the name Horeb. Moses was a fugitive doing what the Egyptians intensely disliked – shepherding; maybe because it reminded them about the Hyksos, or shepherd kings, who ruled for a short time in Egypt until they were expelled about 1600BC (Drane 2000:58) Unlike the owner of the sheep, Moses is not a priest or a prophet; it is an ordinary, everyday journey for him with no “religious” intention (Fretheim 1991:54). The main motivation why he is here is to find pasture for the flock. It is in this wilderness that Yahweh comes to Moses, introducing himself in an intimate way and expresses his saving intention clearly and persuasively.

i) 3:1 – 4. Yahweh Appears in the Burning Bush.

In verse 1 we only hear the voice of the narrator. *Moses was shepherding the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, a priest in Midian.* Moses’ father-in-law occupied a place of honor in Midianite society; he was a priest. By virtue of this position he could also have been a royal adviser. We cannot really comment on Jethro’s religion, and to what extent he was acquainted with the religion of Yahweh, as he does later seem to influence Moses in the task of leading God’s people. It was also common place for a man to work for his father-in-law. Jethro was also called Reuel (Ex.2:18), which means *friend of God*. The name Jethro (*his abundance*), could have been used to accentuate the fact that the flock Moses was tending was a large one. That in itself was going to demonstrate the wealth of God whose flock Moses was later to lead. What Moses was doing for the last forty years, was tending the sheep and small staple animals of another. Though Moses himself does not know it, he was in fact being prepared for what Yahweh was later to call him for.

Midian was an area in north-west Arabia. Though here in this context the Medianites are viewed favorably, they are otherwise seen in an unfavorable light (McNutt 1995:115). When *he led the flock along the west side of the desert*, its location is given relative to Midian, we believe. The word translated *west side* is literally *the behind side*. That is, the side of the setting sun. This is where Moses *led* the flock. His action means, to cause movement by actions of guiding and directing. We prefer the word *led* rather than *drove*, which could imply force. *Desert* could simply be understood as *wilderness*. There obviously must have been grazing for the flock. It makes sense that Moses should go west, because to the east, we find real desert.

Moses brought his flock *to Horeb, the mountain of God*. Opinion is divided as to whether Horeb is here called the mountain of God because it was already a revered religious site or whether the title is being used proleptically, i.e. reflecting a later accepted usage. Mountains, especially Horeb, or Sinai as it is also known in the Old Testament, figure largely in the spiritual history of Moses. Horeb and Sinai are alternate names for the same site, although some commentators suggest that Horeb may be a slightly wider term than Sinai (Enns 2000:95). It was known as the mountain of revelation. (Motyer 2005:48). The name Horeb appears three times in the book of Exodus; here, in Ex.17:6 (where it is a place of revelation, miracles and provision) and Ex.33:6 (where it is the place of idolatry and repentance). This same mountain would become the mountain where the freed slaves were to serve Yahweh (3:12).

In verse 2 again, we have the narrator speaking. Suddenly and unexpectedly *the Angel of Yahweh appeared to Moses*. Rather, the Angel showed himself to Moses. The Hebrew word in the niphal frequently occurs in the context of theophany as *appear*. The word is understood as a self disclosure of the divine, but for Moses all this was evidenced by physical sight. We know this because later Moses covers his face, not wanting to look at God. The Angel of the LORD is frequently equated with God. He is described in terms befitting the deity, and often calls himself God (cf. verses 6 and 14) (Rooker 2003:864).

While *messenger* may be translated from the Hebrew, it is an inadequate term for the range of tasks carried out by the Old Testament מַלְאָכִים (*māl'āk*). In this instance the messenger is a supernatural being, and a special representative of God. Angels can represent God's nature in different ways, but in the Angel of the LORD, he is fully present. Knight (1959:78) calls the Angel an 'alter ego of God himself'. There are many references to angels, but the Angel of the LORD, by this and other titles accorded him, stands out as a unique personage (Motyer 2005:51). This messenger is a visible manifestation of God, and God chose to disclose himself to Moses. Though he frequently receives respect, worship and honor reserved only for God, the Angel of the LORD was consistently distinguished from God (Kaiser 1978:85).

The Angel of Yahweh appeared to Moses *in fire coming from within a thorny bush*. This is a supernatural flame of fire. Enns notes, a common element that regularly accompanies God's self-revelation is fire, here seen in the bush (2000:96). This fire is also a prelude to the subsequent great theophany at Sinai in which Moses took part (Noth 1959:40). The preposition clearly indicates that the appearance of the Angel of Yahweh is out of (from within) the burning bush. The fire was the emanation of the angel's presence. Moses' interest is wholly phenomenal; what he is seeing is indeed a strange sight, considering this is a thorny bush.

Identifying biblical plants has always been a difficult task, partly because people continue to identify the biblical elm, sycamore, lily, rose, and vine with modern plants, and also because they assume that all the plants now growing in the Holy Land were there in ancient biblical days, or that the plants referred to in the Bible are still to be found there today. Unfortunately, many plants now quite common in the Holy Land were not there in biblical days. Many plants that once grew in abundance in the Holy Land are now extinct. (Elwell & Comfort 2001: 1047).

Many believe that the root for תְּסִנָּה means *to prick*, hence the translation thorny bush. Thorny bushes were a common sight in the area; and so were, what others think (blackberry bushes), too. It does not matter whether it was a thorny bush, a

blackberry bush, or any other bush; it was burning. If it was a thorn bush, then it was expected to burn up quickly and with a cracking noise. The word *bush* occurs six times in the Old Testament; five times in Exodus in our present text.

When he inspected it, behold, he saw that the bush, though it was burning, was not being consumed. This is what made the sight more marvelous; it was not being consumed. The fire's natural property was temporarily suspended. Moses never forgot this sight (Dt.33:16, the only other text where "bush" occurs). He was filled with a sense of wonder. The particle interjection translated as *behold*, functions to emphasize the information that follows it. The fact that the bush is not consumed is here being emphasized. Freedman (1969:245) observes that the verb "to burn" in the Hebrew can be construed to mean "burn, blaze" and "burn up, consume". The two verses in harmony remove the difficulty. It shows that the same word is used in two different ways in the same context. This marvelous sight is something that Moses felt must be inspected.

So Moses said to himself, "Turn aside now, and go and inspect this marvelous spectacle to see why this bush does not burn up". This is what Moses said in his heart. Here we have a soliloquy, which shows the narrator's omniscience. To *turn aside* was to change in direction from an intended course or path. The purpose of his inspection was to "find out", "discover" and "learn" information about this strange sight. He has a particular question that he wants answered, namely, '*Why is this bush not burning up?*' He expected it to be consumed, but it is not. He actually does not find the answer, but makes an altogether different discovery; one that would change his life forever.

When Yahweh saw that he had turned aside to look, God called from within the bush and said, "Moses, Moses!" Yahweh saw and called from within the bush. Yahweh is God, and later we are told that "Yahweh" is the name of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (v14-15). That the Lord saw is understood as anthropomorphic, because it expresses the fact that God knows. Yahweh is present and able to see what Moses' intention is. Moses intends to inspect the burning bush, and in order to do so, he has to approach "ground-zero"; the midst of

the bush, where Yahweh was speaking from. The narrator gives this as part of the discourse. The first words uttered, comes from Yahweh, and it is an urgent address to Moses. It is framed as direct speech. While the word spoken is the focus of the theophany, the sight seen is not simply an accessory to the word (Fretheim 1991:54). Sight plays an important role in Moses' hearing as there would have been no hearing if the sight had not been attended to. The root word for seeing occurs 12 times in our text, demonstrating its rhetorical weight.

The urgency is demonstrated when Yahweh calls out Moses' name twice. This call was a loud summoning. It is clear that Moses is known, but he, himself does not know who is speaking to him from within the bush. The word *within* is here the marker of the source of the voice. Moses – the Hebrew turned Egyptian, turned exile, turned shepherd – has an audience with Yahweh (Enns 2000:97), but he does not know who's company he is in.

First, he was surprised by a sight, and now he is surprised by a sound; the voice of an unknown entity. When Moses answers as direct speech, '*Here I am*', he opens the dialogue. This is his first encounter with Yahweh, the God of Israel, and thus the first time he addresses him directly. Before we can discuss the dialogue, we need briefly to reflect on the etiological significance of this burning bush.

This burning bush was a demonstration of Israel's present experience. Yahweh was going to intimate to Moses that he had seen and knew Israel's experience. They were as it were 'on fire', but like the bush, they are miraculously not consumed. Their cruel oppression was unable to destroy them. As with the bush, Yahweh himself was in their midst, and was *within* their burning. The holy God enters into the suffering of the people. Yahweh is calling Moses from there. The real reason why the children of Israel are not being consumed is because Yahweh is present with them, and in fact, they are holy because he is with them. The presence of Yahweh with his people becomes an important theme in the book of Exodus. While in this interpretation the flame would represent Israel's affliction, we have to admit (with Mackay) that it is more probably a representation of God's presence (2001:68).

Fretheim's observation is helpful when he says that this is not an ecstatic vision. While it is unusual, what is seen is within the world. As with other theophanies, God uses nature as a vehicle for "clothing" that which is not natural. The natural does not stand over against the divine but serves as an instrument for the purposes of God, evoking holiness, passion, and mystery (fire) and down-to-earthness (bush). (1991:55). God's own pre-emptive presence is here.

ii) 3:5 – 6 Yahweh Introduces Himself.

The God who called Moses from within the bush, is referred to here in verse 5 as the one who speaks to him. God instructs him, '*Do not come near here*'. The prohibition was for Moses not to approach the bush, and that was exactly what Moses was going to do. The urgency of God's call might have already stopped him in his tracks, but the instruction not to approach definitely would have. It was not that Yahweh did not want Moses in his presence, but he knows that nobody can approach his immediate presence and live. He, however, makes it possible for Moses to be in his presence, by giving him a further instruction; and even then that instruction needs to be motivated. His presence means grace; it sanctifies; for he is gloriously holy. It is interesting to note that whenever Yahweh speaks, it is framed as direct speech emphasizing his presence there.

The second instruction he is given is one that was clearly understood in those days. The motivation is given with it. God said to him, *Take your footwear off your feet, because the place you are standing upon is holy ground*. Still, Moses does not know who is commanding him, but we may believe that he responds exactly in the way he is commanded to. Removing one's footwear in a holy place was not uncommon, for it was a token of reverence. Shoes were not worn in the temple or on any holy ground (Ex 3:5; Jos 5:15) and were also taken off when a person was in a house. It was customary to remove the sandals at a time of mourning (Elwell & Beitzel 1988:777). Moses is told that the place he is standing on is holy ground, and that is the reason he is told to remove his shoes. While the verses do not say

that Yahweh is holy, they imply that holiness is where Yahweh is, and unassisted humankind cannot approach him. That presence transforms everything at hand, including the place and the conversation. God's holiness requires a respectful distance (Breuggemann 1994:712). Before Moses removed his shoes he certainly was not in a posture of reverence. He is standing, straight and vertical, and anyone standing in the presence of God in that way was standing in front of a superior as an offering, or to be evaluated, and Moses did neither.

While we agree with Fretheim to some extent when he says, "The recognition of holiness does not lead to passivity in the presence of God. Passivity in the presence of God will close down the revelatory possibilities", we cannot accept that God's way into the future is not dictated solely by God's sovereign intention (1991:52-53), unless by "divine word and will" he means something less than sovereign intention. He cannot make the conclusion that the intention was any differently conceived by God. Surely, we come from the presupposition that God is omniscient and sovereign.

What is understood by "holy" is not always clear, but we know that the ground was holy, and it could not be stood upon in a flippant manner. One thing we may deduce is that the ground was in a state of consecration affected by the presence and the wonder. Yahweh's presence made the place holy. The place was transformed by the speech and the presence of God. Not only was the place consecrated, but Moses, by removing his footwear, was sanctified. This mountain is called the Mountain of God because his presence will become frequent at this mountain. It is his presence that makes this place holy. Moses himself was to consider this place holy. This, Moses did not know until God introduces himself to him.

God introduces himself to Moses saying, *I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob*. The statement that Yahweh is the God of the patriarchs is mentioned four times in our present text (3:6, 15, 16 and 4:5). The frequency of restatement is a rhetorical demonstration of its emphasis. In this statement Yahweh also makes a declaration. There was a

historical connection between Moses and Yahweh. A longstanding relationship must be taken for granted. The book of Exodus begins with the fact that God remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (2:24-25). That God remembered the covenant does not mean that he had previously forgotten about it, but that now the time had come for God to actively intervene in the circumstances of his people. It is on the basis of the covenant that he hears their cry “out from the heaviness of their slavery in Egypt” (Linington 2002:696-7). Loader makes an important remark; that the fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham becomes the threat to God’s plan, for the Egyptians persecute Israel because they are so numerous. In this persecution, we are made aware of the extent of human wickedness, especially when it comes as a response against the blessings that God gives his people. Yahweh intervenes and saves his people. (1998:490).

Yahweh is the God of the present and the past. First of all, he is the God of Moses’ father. Many interpreters take this as plural. The text is definitely using a masculine singular construct noun with a second person masculine singular suffix. He was the God of Amran. He was the God of Moses’ family religion, and therefore Moses had a personal obligation to him. This explains Moses’ response to this introduction.

He is also the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Immediately, he declares himself to be the God who is in a covenant relationship with Israel by the covenant he made with their ancestors. His promise meant taking sides with oppressed Israel (Fretheim 1991:57). These three names were identifiable to Moses, and the fact that he was now communicating with their God, left him with no option but to respond as he did. *Moses concealed his face because he was afraid to look at God.* The narrator informs us of Moses’ reason why he responds in the way he does. God is visible but must not be seen.

The concealment of Moses’ face is in fact heightened by the double causative hiphil which has two objects. Firstly, Moses was absenting himself, and secondly, he was hiding God from his sight; as Noth alludes that there was a God to be seen in some visible way (1959:38). Either way, he covered his face to protect himself, for no one can look at God and live. We would be remiss to give the impression

that Moses' fear was solely that of dread; no, it was also an expression of profound respect and deep reverence. We are certain that Yahweh had Moses' full attention and right attitude, because he had just received a crash course in holy etiquette (Enns 2000:98).

b) Ex. 3:7 – 10 Yahweh Commissions Moses.

Why did Yahweh call this audience with Moses? Why did he appear to Moses? This question is at the heart of this present pericope. God reveals himself to man, and informs him visibly and audibly of his presence and agenda. Here we find out what this whole encounter is all about. Yahweh wants to do something and he wants to invite Moses to get involved in his agenda. Though much bigger than Moses, yet Yahweh decided that he will not do what he intends doing without Moses, as they both confront Pharaoh. It is clear that Yahweh is the protagonist of the story, while Pharaoh is the antagonist. The confrontation between Yahweh and Pharaoh constitutes a divine battle: Yahweh versus the gods of Egypt personified and embodied in the pharaoh (Deist 1989:41).

i) 3:7 – 9 Yahweh Intervenes for Israel.

Yahweh has experienced Israel's situation in a profound way. It is precisely this experience that moves Yahweh to do what he is going to do. Moses had already experienced it to some extent, when he tried to be deliverer forty years ago, but he might have forgotten about it. Maybe he was just disillusioned by his failed attempt as deliverer. Yet, unless he saw Yahweh's heart on this matter, he will himself remain apathetic. The only way that Yahweh can convince Moses of his experience, is to communicate it to him and to call him to service.

Then Yahweh said, I have surely seen the oppression of my people in Egypt
The direct speech is a declaration made by Yahweh. When he said that he was Abraham, Isaac and Jacob's God, Yahweh was saying that he is Israel's God too

(Gen.17:8), and that they are his people. This was God’s pledge to be the protector of his people, and the one who provides for their well-being. The center of Yahweh’s Covenant with them is; “I will be your God, and you will be *my people*”. They were Yahweh’s treasured possession (Ex. 19:5). Yahweh was on the side of the Israelites.

God’s people were *in Egypt*. Their ancestors went to Egypt during the time of Joseph. We may therefore accept the unity of the Pentateuch which is attested to in various portions of the Old Testament, as well as in portions of the New Testament. Even the opening phrase of the Book of Exodus, “Now these are the names,” provides clear evidence to that unity. The Hebrew prefix that is translated “now” is the common form of the conjunction in Hebrew (most often translated “and” or “but”) and indicates that there was some other book which preceded the Book of Exodus. (Zodhiates and Baker 2000:n.p). The unity between Genesis and Exodus is demonstrated in Exodus 13:19 (*cf.* Gen.50:25). This is also the case with the repeated reference to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Their ancestors came to Egypt during the life of Joseph. Then, the Egyptians provided sustenance and life, but now they were bent on destroying the Israelites. Already when Moses was born, the new Pharaoh saw their increasing numbers as a threat to Egypt and instructed the midwives to kill all the boy babies. The increased hard labor was intended to make the Israelites infertile. Their slave-drivers were oppressing them with a heavy hand.

When Yahweh says, *I have surely seen the oppression* he means that he has indeed noticed their plight. God was in close proximity with their pain. The verb, רָאָה is repeated here to emphasize Yahweh’s action; *I have surely seen* or “I have definitely seen”, or “I have looked intently”. Yahweh is absolutely and completely involved in Israel’s circumstances. He participates in their suffering. What Yahweh sees is *the oppression* of his people.

The oppression the Israelites were suffering was severe, and Yahweh will certainly save them. The three verbs, *seen*, *heard* and *know* used together, show the intensity of Yahweh's experience. His participation in their suffering is truly intense. *I have heard their cry in the presence of their oppressors, and I know their anguish.* Yahweh has paid attention and heeded the cry of his people. It is a hearing that renders a response. As God had heard, they too will be exhorted to hear in their covenantal confession, "Hear O Israel", known as the Shema. God saves and man obeys. Redemption is the ground and motivation for obedience to Yahweh.

Israel's *cry* in the presence of their oppressors is a cry of deep anguish. It is really an outcry that indicates sorrow, despair and pain. It is a cry for help under great distress. It is a cry in desperation. God heard their desperate cry and he wants to save them from their situation. Their anguish was displayed *in the presence* of their oppressors. Their anguish was literally "in the faces" of their oppressors. The Egyptians knew their anguish but they would not relent.

When Yahweh said, *I know their anguish* he meant that he was more than familiar with their suffering. He actually shared their pain with them. He had an intimate experience of their anguish. He understood both their physical pain and their mental suffering. This verb (יָדַעְתִּי) expresses Yahweh's compassion for his people in their deep affliction.

When the Egyptians provided sustenance and life to God's people, they were instrumental in fulfilling the seed promise of God's covenant to his people. But when God had blessed them by multiplying them, the Egyptians turned against their guests. It was time for God to give them their own land. The only way they would be willing to move away from Egypt, would be because of the oppression they were suffering, and because they knew that Yahweh would bring them out of that land. Yahweh promises to do just that.

When Yahweh said, *I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians* he came from above to the earth; that is, to the place where humans

live. The oft-asked question, “Who will deliver the people; Yahweh or Moses?” is misdirected. It fails to recognize the simple fact that Yahweh is inviting Moses to be part of his redemptive activity. Noth sees that Yahweh is seen as the deliverer by J, while Moses is posited as such by E (1959:40-41). This too is unnecessary. Be that as it may, the narrator takes for granted a sort of dualistic view in terms of God as from above (3:8 ‘*I have come down...*’). This nuance is seen in the fact that their cry has come up to Yahweh (3:9). The situation required divine intervention, and Yahweh was willing to presence himself in the midst of his peoples’ suffering. In Enns’ words, the phrase is typical biblical language to describe what God does when he intervenes in human affairs (2000:99). In order to deliver them he needed to *come down*. That does not mean that God is not omnipresent, but what it does mean is that he is present to identify with his people and to act on their behalf. Breuggemann (1994:712) is more graphic in his explanation: “... God is now physically (!) mobilized to be present in the midst of the trouble”.

He had already expressed the fact of his identifying with his people when he said to Moses, *I have seen their oppression ... I have heard their cry... I know their anguish*. How will he act on their behalf? He will *deliver them* from the hand of the Egyptians. He will bring them up from the flames of their affliction. He came down to bring them up! This deliverance will demonstrate the urgency about God’s action on behalf of his people. His deliverance will be quick and decisive, leaving the Egyptians empty-handed. He will snatch them up as it were.

God will deliver them *out of the hand* of the Egyptians, The Egyptians will lose their grip over God’s people. The hand evokes the idea of power and strength. The Egyptians will no longer have authority over the Israelites when Yahweh delivers them. They will have no strength to hold them because their hand cannot match the mighty hand of Yahweh. By Yahweh’s mighty hand Pharaoh will let the Israelites go (3:19). We can hardly miss the imagery that there is a contest between the hand of Egypt and that of Yahweh.

When Yahweh has delivered his people, *he will bring them out of that land*. The Egyptians will have power over the Israelites for as long as they are in their land.

What God promised Jacob will come true. “Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you into a great nation there. I will go down to Egypt with you and I will surely bring you back again.” (Gen.46:3-4). God knows that they will only truly be free from Egyptian oppression when they are out of that land, and Yahweh has undertaken to bring them out. But where will they go to? They are a nation without a land, and the way things are now, they have no destiny. Surely, God must remember his promise to Abraham; to give his seed a land clearly demarcated in Genesis 15:18f? He does. As Fretheim so eloquently states, that God will not leave Israel in a halfway house, redeemed but left in a chaotic wilderness. Deliverance for God is finally not only *from* something, it is *to* something, enabling the people to move from redemption to creation. God’s historical goal is a creational end. The goal is not reform, to make life more bearable in Egypt. It is removal from the situation. This makes it clear that God chooses Moses for activity in the sociopolitical arena; it is no ecclesiastical office to which Moses is called. (1991:59-61).

He promises to bring them *into a good and spacious land*. The word *good* includes the ideas of a land that is pleasing, beautiful, pleasant and agreeable to its inhabitants. The word *spacious* includes the ideas of a land which is large, open, wide and broad. Certainly, this is not only compared with the space they occupied in Goshen, but it speaks of more than adequate space for their whole population. It speaks of a fertile land that will provide adequately for them all. The land’s ability to provide lavishly is expressed in the phrase, *to a land flowing with milk and honey*. The participle זָבַת can equally be translated as “gushing”. *Milk and honey* are figurative expressions indicating the abundance of the land, providing nourishment and sweetness (delight). According to Mackay it depicts, not cultivated land, but pastoral land (2001:72).

So far we have discovered *what kind* of land Yahweh would give the Israelites. It will be a land of abundance. Now we discover *which* land God will give to them. The description really coincides with the promise to Abraham, except that there Abraham is told the geographic location as described by its boundaries. Here we

are given, more-or-less, the same portion as described by the peoples currently inhabiting it. Yahweh will take them to *the habitation of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites*. Yahweh would have to dispossess these nations of their land and give it to the Israelites. The gift of the land is a new place for life and blessing. God's redemptive act leads to a new creation, and to a new way of life. The word *habitation* may also be translated "stronghold", meaning that the dispossession will come by means of war.

Verse 9 reiterates what was stated in verse 7, but this time Yahweh invites Moses to experience some of what he has experienced. *Now, see, the cry of the sons of Israel*. Moses is invited to take note that the Israelites' cry has reached God; that God was aware of their cry. An interjection demanding Moses' attention is used here. Again, emphasis is made of God's awareness of the oppression the Israelites are suffering. Their suffering is put squarely at the door of the Egyptians. They are the cause; they are the perpetrators of the oppression of the Israelites. It is called *the oppression with which the Egyptians are oppressing them*. Putting it in this way could also describe an oppression characteristic of the Egyptians. They oppressed with specific oppression-know-how. It was a specialized ability to trouble. God's intervention was warranted, and Moses was to be his agent. Israel is not to be like Egypt; they are not ever to become oppressors of others.

ii) 3:10 Yahweh Sends Moses.

So far, Yahweh spoke only of what he intended to do. Now, he is about to tell Moses how he fits into all of this. This is the crux of our present text. From verse 10 the narrator follows the typical logical argumentative progression in its rhetoric. Yahweh makes an assertion, *I am sending you to Pharaoh*; and he gives the reason, *to bring my people out of Egypt*; which Moses counters, *Who am I ...*; Yahweh provides an analogy, *this is the sign...*; and gives himself as an example, *I will stretch out my hand...*; and the conclusion is, *I will bring you to a land*. After a massive intrusion of God, the exodus has suddenly become a human enterprise.

Moses will meet with Pharaoh, and Moses will bring the people up with him. (Breuggemann 1994:713).

Yahweh finally tells Moses, *So now, go, I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt.* Moses has a two-fold imperative, namely, to *go to Pharaoh* and to *bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt.* Immediately, Moses recognizes what Yahweh is asking him to do. In Moses' mind it certainly is an ambitious request. There is no ambiguity about what Yahweh is asking Moses to do. He has got to go to Pharaoh. The second part of the imperative gives him the reason why he is to go to Pharaoh; to tell him to let the Israelites leave Egypt. At least, the clause, *I am sending you,* gives Moses a mandate from Yahweh and with Yahweh's authority.

Pharaoh is the official title borne by the Egyptian kings down to the time when that country was conquered by the Greeks. Easton (1996: n.p.) suggests that the rise of the Nineteenth Dynasty, the founder of which, Rameses I., we must see as the "new king, who knew not Joseph." His grandson, Rameses II., reigned sixty-seven years (1348-1281), and was an indefatigable builder. As Pithom, excavated by Dr. Naville in 1883, was one of the cities he built, he must have been the Pharaoh of the Oppression. The Pharaoh of the Exodus may have been one of his immediate successors, whose reigns were short. Under them Egypt lost its empire in Asia, and was itself attacked by barbarians from Libya and the north.

Moses must go to the king of Egypt and claim his slaves as belonging to Yahweh. The command to go assumes access. What the protocol for such access is, the text does not say. When Yahweh tells Moses to "bring *my people* out of Egypt", he speaks as a king about a people he is responsible for. These people are Yahweh's peculiar possession. He is their king. He has a covenant relationship with them by unconditional royal grant to Abraham (*c.f.* Merrill 1996:168); and by his deliverance, he will seal that relationship. He will be their God, and they will be his people. God sends Moses with a clear mandate, but he is not keen to go.

c) Ex. 3:11 – 22 Yahweh Answers Moses and Gives Him A Message.

Thus far, Yahweh has done all the talking. The only thing that Moses spoke was the response, “Here I am”, to God calling out his name. Besides that, Moses listened to Yahweh fully stating his case. That was all that Yahweh needed to say, but because there is some tension created by Moses’ unwillingness to accede to God’s command, the dialogue continues further. God does not enforce his will upon Moses. God is open to use gentleness to nurse Moses along the path of his irreversible sovereignty. In a real sense, each of the subsequent objections arises from a perspective of past experience, and each of God’s replies points him forward to a new reality of faith which has been promised (Childs 1974:73). Yahweh is, nevertheless, willing to listen to Moses, giving him the right to raise, sometimes valid, objections and to dialogue with him.

i) 3:11 – 12 Moses’ First Objection and Yahweh’s Answer.

Moses does not comment on Yahweh’s plan. The plan seems good, and one would have expected Moses to respond with excitement. His lack of enthusiasm is not because the prospect of Israel’s deliverance is not exciting, but because Moses actually doubts himself. It is interesting to see that the second time he speaks, his opening words are nearly the same as his only words spoken thus far; instead of *Here am I*, it is now, *Who am I?* He considers himself a ‘nobody’. Moses sees no significance in himself. He sees himself as too small for this great task. Yes, he assumes a stance of humility too, but his error is that he is looking at himself and his ability. Surely, one can only gain immeasurably by being honest with God, as there is nothing we cannot say to him, and nothing he does not know.

Moses has tried before to be deliverer to the Israelites, but they had rejected him, and they were the cause of him becoming a refugee in Midian. Moses’ previous failure may have prompted such a response. But in his response he shows that he

fully understands what Yahweh was asking him to do, because he repeats Yahweh's instruction to him with exact accuracy. The two-fold imperative is accurately restated; "Who am I that *I should go to Pharaoh*, and also that *I should bring with me the sons of Israel out of Egypt?*" Moses fully understands his task, but he doubts whether he is able to pull it off. This, the first of Moses' five objections, is a sense of personal inadequacy.

Yahweh's answer to Moses' need is also the answer to the nation's need; not only to deliver them, but also for their future. When Yahweh said, *Surely, I will be with you*, he was really saying that "it matters not who you are, but who I am and I will be with you". The promise *I will be with you* means quite literally that God will be present with and for Moses. This promise was to exemplify the name of God. By virtue of God's answer, who Moses is, can henceforth be measured adequately only by including a reference to Yahweh who is present with him. If who Moses is, is to be defined henceforth with reference to the presence of Yahweh, then who Moses is depends to that degree on who Yahweh is (Janzen 1979:234). Moses is challenged to move beyond who he knows himself to be and to re-define himself as one who is promised the presence of God himself. Yahweh met Moses' inadequacy with the pledge of his own sufficiency.

It is important to note that the Lord does not promise Moses to take away his inadequacy, or to give him boldness, or to make him eloquent. Moses is called upon to trust in Yahweh. He needs to rest in Yahweh's presence, bearing simple testimony to the revelation he has received and doing what Yahweh instructs him to do. (Motyer 2005:61). When Yahweh said, *I will be with you*, it was as if the divine name was announced even before the question of verse 13 was asked. In itself the promise of Yahweh's presence will also serve as a sign to Moses.

This will be the sign to you that it is I who sent you. God will confirm his calling of Moses by his presence with him. This will also become the affirmation of Moses' calling to the Israelites. The problem for many scholars is what does the demonstrative, *this* (אֵלֶּהּ), refer to? Without feeling the need to discuss it, we can

immediately dismiss the notion of it referring to the bush itself. While we have translated this verse like we have, in order to reflect our interpretation of the sign, we know that other scholars relate the sign solely to Mount Horeb. The sign will be the actual worshipping of the Israelites at the mountain. Most of them recognize the problem with this interpretation; it is really a fulfillment, and would benefit Moses nothing in his present difficulty. A sign should precede the fulfillment (Childs 1974:57). How can it encourage Moses to do what he does not want to do, because, in this case, the sign would only come after his going? The sign is really meant to encourage and to function as the confirmation of the calling of Moses to take this assignment. The fact that they will worship at this mountain is an indication that success is guaranteed. We take the line that the sign refers to the preceding statement, *I will be with you*.

Let us now consider the precise statement. *When you have brought all the people out of Egypt, together you will worship God at this mountain*. Here, we have in fact a two-fold promise. In the first instance, we see that Yahweh promises that *all the people* will come out of Egypt. None of the Israelites will be left behind. Secondly, they will *together worship God at (or upon) this mountain*. It anticipates the exodus and the successful escape of the Israelites from the Egyptians. It also reflects the unity that they as a nation will enjoy. They will worship God *together*. Bringing the people out of Egypt is not an end in itself. It is a prelude to bringing them into a living, personal relationship with Yahweh himself.

It does not matter whether *this mountain* refers to a specific peak or a range, as is often the contention, but what is important, is that the people will *worship* God there. It is perhaps for this reason that it is called “the mountain of God” in 3:1. To worship their God, is after all the reason given to Pharaoh for him to release the Israelites. The idea of worship includes the concept of obedient service. There at the mountain of God they will give their energy and devotion to Yahweh. God has told Moses that though he thinks of himself as inadequate, he can nevertheless be used to fulfill this great task. The answer is not in his personal ability, but in the ability of the God who is with him. The God, who is with him, will give him success. God fully answered Moses’ first objection.

ii) 3:13 – 15 Moses' Second Objection and Yahweh's Answer.

Moses' second objection expresses his doubt in his reception by the Israelites. When at first he saw himself as inadequate, Moses now sees himself as ignorant. This second objection is really only a hypothetical problem he raises. At least, it is also a hypothetical agreement to go. Thus far, Yahweh only spoke of his approach to Pharaoh, but Moses knows that it is inevitable for him to approach the Israelites in order for them to be led out by him. It is this inevitable approach which Moses brings to the fore, when he says, *Behold, if I go to the sons of Israel...* He is calling this to God's attention. He would need to gain their trust. He would need to authenticate his mandate. He would need to convince them. His objection is that he does not quite know how to answer all these questions.

He knows what to say when he introduces himself to the Israelites. He would say, *The God of your fathers has sent me to you*, but he does not think that that is enough. False prophets can make the same claim, when in fact they are not sent by God. If he could demonstrate some intimacy with this God, he might convince them. But he does not even know his name. His ignorance will be eliminated when he is able to answer the one really important question, namely, if *they ask me*, *'What is his name?' What shall I say to them?* Why does he think they would want to know? Is it not really that he wants to know? Moses was saying to God, 'Identify yourself more fully'. According to Childs, the projected response of the people to Moses' proclamation is not regarded as a remote reaction, but as the natural one which he is sure to expect. The question suggests that the verification of Moses' commission is integrally tied to the revelation of the divine name. (1974:66).

Names often had serious significance in those days. In the case of God's name; his name was his story. It summed up who he was, and what he wanted to make known about himself. (Motyer 2005:68). Whereas, in the first objection Moses was asking, 'Who am I?' In the second objection he is now asking, 'Who are you?' (Durham 1987:37). What's in the name of Israel's God, Yahweh? What is in that name, is its actual history, and the future as claimed by that history. (Janzen

1979:227). Moses' role as true apostle is reaffirmed in the light of his relationship with the one who sent him; he knows his true name. What then does Yahweh answer Moses?

God said to Moses, *I am that I am*. As we have said above, there is a good case for 'I will be what/who I will be', and in this case it has the force of God saying, I will be God for you. Not only will he be present, but he will be faithfully God for them. It means to exist in the absolute sense. It is his dynamic and powerful presence for Moses and for the people. God is saying, "I am truly he who exists and who will be dynamically present then and there in the situation to which I am sending you". (Gæbelein 1990:319-21). He is the God who makes himself known by his active-presence among his people. God's name was his person, his character, his authority, his power and his reputation (Petersen 2007:4). *I am that I am* says that God is sovereign, inexhaustible and independent. With this statement Moses is given the full name, but he is told what exactly *to say to the sons of Israel*. To them he must say, *I am has sent me to you*.

The cluster of the verb שְׁלַח־אֲנִי (*shelach-an*) here shows its significance. The root of this verb occurs 11 times in our present text. Moses comes with a definite mandate and authorization, being sent from the one who is sovereign and powerful. Moses is to go with confidence to the Israelites because he is one sent. It is to them, and to Pharaoh, that Moses is sent.

Moses was to give them the shorter version of the name, אֶהְיֶה (*ehyeh*) given to him. The proper name *Yahweh* (*yhwh*) given in verse 15, and *I am* (*ehyeh*) are apparently derived from the same root. Enns is of the opinion that the statement, *I am that I am*, is not God's name, but a preparatory comment that introduces the following announcement. According to him the divine name seems to be *I am*. (2000:103). God is not named by others; he gives his own name. We appreciate Fretheim's comment that when God gave his name, he was willing to join the historical community and break the distance typical of an unnamed entity (1991:65). We disagree, however, that the having of a name makes God

“vulnerable” (*ibid*), because the very meaning of the name is one that includes the facts of God’s sovereign and creative power. ‘*I am*’ is the name Moses was given to give to the Israelites.

The tetragrammaton, יהוה, is the proper name of the God of Israel. It is often used in combination. It was regarded as a *nomen ineffabile* called by the Jews. The pronunciation *Jehovah* was unknown until the 1520’s. Even though this name was so revered that it was hardly used in speech, or that it was used in a surrogate form, the transmission of Scriptural usage was meticulous. Howard says in his article, “Perhaps the most significant observation we can draw from the pattern of variegated usage of the divine name is that the Tetragram was held to be very sacred... But in copying the biblical text itself the Tetragram was carefully guarded.” (1977:73). Many scholars see it as the Hiphil of the verb היה, which points to God as creator. Most scholars see it as the Qal of that verb, which points to God as ever existing and sovereign.

From v15 to the end of the chapter, we find only divine speech. Moses will say nothing for the rest of this chapter. Verse 15, however, rounds off what is said in verses 13 and 14. Yahweh reiterates what he said in verse 14, except that there are a few additions to what was said. *And again God said to Moses*, demonstrates the reiteration by adding the word ‘again’. Moses is told what to say, and whom to say it to. He is to say what he must say *to the sons of Israel*.

There are two things he must tell them. The first is, *Yahweh, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you*. Yahweh is the God of their ancestors, and he has sent Moses to them. He is the covenant-making and covenant-keeping God. The covenant he made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, was a royal grant, and was a covenant of which they too were the beneficiaries. Yahweh’s relationship with the Israelites is unique. It is as valid now as it had been with Abraham. This selfsame God, Yahweh, had sent Moses to them. Moses was definitely one sent by Yahweh himself.

Unconditional royal grants were fairly common in the time of Abraham. An example of four occurrences is found in the Hittite Laws dating to ca. 1650-1500 BC - translated by Harry A. Hoffner (2000:106-119). This collection was later than the Sumerian law collections of Ur-Nammu and Lipit-Ishtar and the Akkadian laws of Eshnunna and Hammurabi, but earlier than the Middle Assyrian laws and the laws of the Hebrew Bible. The Abrahamic Covenant must be taken as an underlying aspect of this whole redemptive narrative and of God's actions on Israel's behalf. Under this kind of covenant, fiefs are granted to loyal servants by the king and require no further action on behalf of the grantee (Achtmeier 1985: 191).

Yahweh had not forgotten his covenant and his relationship with the Israelites. So, Israel too is not to forget. Yahweh is God's name forever and it must not be forgotten. Our text states that imperative positively: *This is my name forever and it will be to my remembrance from generation to generation*. Enns is correct; this could not have been a new name, as it would not have helped Moses if they did not recognize the name. He gives five other reasons too. (2000:103-4). They who say that it is a newly revealed name find it particularly hard to explain earlier mention of the name *Yahweh*. Davila observes that the appearance of *Yahweh* in the MT of Gen.22:14 had long been recognized as a problem. Some scholars have deleted it and, offering various hypothetical scenarios, reconstructed *EI* or *Elohim* in its place (1991:581). We should not only understand the concept of remembrance as a function of memory, but that it implies honor, worship and celebration of the one who bears the name. This kind of faith and honor with reference to Yahweh is actively to be handed down *from generation to generation*. As God never changes, so his name will remain *forever* and it will never change.

As a prophet, Moses recognizes that his authority will be understood by his speaking in that Name. Deuteronomy, too, discusses the question of the true prophet and the false prophet. Dt. 13:2–6 deals with the case of a נְבִיא who summons to the worship of other gods. He is to be regarded as an enemy of Yahweh and put to death. In 18:20 the threat of death is also suspended over the

נְבִיא who speaks in Yahweh's name without any commission from Yahweh. (Kittel *etal.* 1976:807)

iii) 3:16 – 22. Moses Given a Message for the Elders.

God assures Moses of success with a second discourse which anticipates the future. The people will believe; the king will be hardened; the Egyptians will be plagued; the deliverance will occur, and finally the Egyptians will be despoiled. From God's perspective the way is clear. His whole plan unfolds before an open future. (Childs 1974:77). Moses, however, does not see the way clear.

Every society has its own ways of organizing themselves. Israel was mainly patriarchal, and was led by the elders of the community. The community was often divided along tribal and then extended family lines. The elders of the community would thus have been representatives of their various tribes and extended families. It cannot be said for certain that such was the representation of the people before the exodus while they were in Egypt, but it is very likely the case, as this was how they were organized immediately after in their wilderness setting. The elders were the leaders of the community. They were often selected on the basis of seniority and wisdom.

Moses is instructed by Yahweh to *go and assemble the elders of Israel*. We know that the elders were the chief or prominent men among the people. They were generally men of vigorous old age. They were the representation of the people; not only to Moses, but also to Pharaoh. They are at the same time the leaders of the Israelites. Osborn and Hatton (1999:103) confirm that the **elders** were the senior tribesmen of Israel, who were recognized for both their maturity and their ability to be "leaders," not necessarily for the number of years they had lived. If in a receptor language the two ideas of leadership and authority that these people had can be combined in one term, then that term will be a good translation for **elders**. They seem to be a prominent group with common interests, principles, values, norms

and duties. They were thus the men who would mediate between Moses and the people. Moses needed to establish the most appropriate and efficient way of communicating with the Israelites. The elders would be in the best position to mobilize the people. Yahweh sends Moses directly to the Israelite elders.

When Moses had assembled the elders, he had to give them a message from Yahweh. In the first place Moses had to say to them, *Yahweh, the God of your fathers, has appeared to me*. Moses had to authenticate his authority as God's messenger. The authentication is found in the fact that Yahweh has appeared to him. That also demonstrates to them that Moses has an intimate relationship with Yahweh, for he not only knows his name, but he has seen Yahweh. God would later further authenticate Moses as his messenger by an ability to do signs and wonders. As Moses must tell them that he has seen God, so he must also tell them that God had seen them in their suffering. Yahweh's appearance to Moses will also witness on behalf of the entire community, for this was what the elders too had to testify.

In the second place Moses had to say to them, *The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob says, 'I have seen and have taken stock of what was done to you in Egypt'*. The children of Israel were the victims in Egypt, and God had taken special notice of their victimization. The two words, פָּקַד פִּקְדָתֵי, used together, has the effect of, "seeing, I have noticed", or, "counting, I have taken stock". By putting it in the way that he does, Yahweh is actually saying, I also know who the perpetrators are. The blame is laid at Egypt's door.

This is not the first time Moses is told to mention the patriarchs. The inclusion of their prime ancestor, Abraham, signifies the point in time when this relationship was established and the historical continuity of the relationship of Yahweh with his offspring. His sole function is to define Yahweh's ongoing commitment to his people in terms of the coordinates of time and space. He is a historical-geographical referent of the ongoing divine presence. (Nürnberg 1993:7). Reference to the patriarchal narratives is positioned in the exodus story in such a

way that the God of the exodus was identified as the God of the patriarchs. The exodus would thus also serve as the means to fulfill the land promises given to Abraham. In addition to that we are shown how the blessing /cursing aspect of the promise is here unfolding; those who bless Israel will be blessed, and those who curse Israel will be cursed. Pharaoh's resistance to Israel's demand to worship Yahweh in freedom costs him and the Egyptian population dearly. (Nürnberg 1993:11).

The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob will deal with the Egyptians according to their culpability. But first, Yahweh's resolve is to act on behalf of the victims, especially since they are his people. God's resolve is firm, direct and deliberate. *Therefore I have declared...*, demonstrates Yahweh's resolute commitment to his people. His declarations are as good as done. It cannot be frustrated, even though that might be what Pharaoh would try to do. Yahweh says to his people, *I will bring you out of your misery in Egypt*. Yahweh promises his personal intervention on Israel's behalf. God is going to carry them up out of the state of hardship and trouble, which they are experiencing in Egypt. Where will Yahweh take them? Yahweh's statement in verse 8 is here repeated. We are told exactly where and what kind of land they will be taken to. It is a specific land of abundance which Yahweh will give them as their inheritance. The people are both to be brought out and taken into (Motyer 2005:72).

Moses' first approach must be to the elders. Yahweh tells Moses that he will be successful in his mission to the elders. They will accept what he says to them, and when they do, he is to go with them to Pharaoh. *Then, when the elders have heard your message, go with the elders of Israel to the king of Egypt...* Normal protocol requires them to have some qualifications in order to enter Pharaoh's presence.

Secondly, what they have to say to Pharaoh provides them with the appropriate qualification. They were to say to him, *'Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews, met with us*. They were able to enter Pharaoh's presence because they were in Yahweh's presence. Having been in the presence of their God, gave to them the "right" to enter the presence of a lesser "deity", Pharaoh. If their God met with them, then

surely Pharaoh can meet with them also. Yes, later Pharaoh will say that he does not know Yahweh, but Yahweh is intent on making himself known to the Egyptians, and he will show them that, in fact, Pharaoh is not his equal.

Yahweh is known to the *Hebrews*, because he is their God. The term *Hebrew* means 'one from beyond', and is often used to distinguish them from other nations. They are an ethnic group of people connected to Abraham, a stranger from the Euphrates area. The elders and Moses met with the God of the Hebrews, and he told them what to say to Pharaoh.

What Moses and his delegation have to say to Pharaoh, is here not cast as a command, or as a demand. Rhetorically, they appeal to his sense of logic with the words, "*So now*" What follows is logical to the speaker. By this the hearer should be convinced. The interjection, "*Please*" is used as a submissive and modest request. It is a word of entreaty. Pharaoh is called upon to uphold the principle of religious freedom. *Let us go a journey of three days into the desert and offer a sacrifice to Yahweh, our God.* On the one hand, the Hebrews must acknowledge that Yahweh is their God. Pharaoh, on the other hand, is asked to allow the Hebrews to worship their own God. Their worship requires faithful service and sacrifice. Pharaoh should understand that the full extent of this principle means to allow the Hebrews to travel a journey of three days in order to worship their God, since in the light of his own belief Egypt is the domain of the Egyptian deities. When Pharaoh refuses to accede to their request, Yahweh will demonstrate that he is God in Egypt too.

Yahweh appeals to his omniscience when he says; *I know that the king of Egypt will not give in to you.* Yahweh knows that Pharaoh will not accede to their request. The king of Egypt will not relent. Pharaoh's unwillingness becomes the very reason for Yahweh to harden his heart. Deist speaks of a *hardening motif* as a second plot line of the story (1989:45). The obstinacy of Pharaoh will also provide Yahweh with the opportunity to demonstrate his might. *He will not let you go, until by my mighty hand he does.* In the rhetoric of our text the term, *hand*, is often used (It occurs 13 times). It is an expression depicting power, where the extension of the hand is to

manipulate or control the environment or situation. In this case the hand of God will be against the king of Egypt. The mighty hand of Yahweh will overcome the hand of the Egyptians (v.8). Yahweh will also use the hand of Moses to do mighty signs and wonders. Pharaoh will finally give in and let them go.

Hoffmeier (1986:378-387) provides an excellent interpretation of the use of the hand-motif in the liberation from Egypt. The expressions “mighty hand” and “outstretched arm” are frequently found in Exodus and Deuteronomy with reference to the contest between Yahweh and Pharaoh. Metaphorically they mean power or strength in the imagery of a warrior. Yahweh is a divine warrior on Israel’s behalf. These expressions are also attested to in ancient Egyptology as applied to Pharaoh or a god. Ramesses III (1185-1154 B.C.), for instance, is called “Lord of a powerful arm who smites Asiatics”. Yahweh and the writer(s) of the exodus material (and the reminiscences in Deuteronomy) were familiar with Egyptian expressions and appropriated them, showing that Yahweh is a conquering divine warrior. Yahweh will demonstrate his legitimacy as the greatest God by his arm defeating that of Pharaoh (cf. Ex.18:10-11).

Yahweh promises Moses, *I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt*. There is a contest between the hand of Egypt and the hand of Yahweh. Yahweh’s hand will *strike with performing wonders* among the Egyptians. Yahweh will perform these wonders right *in their midst*. The Egyptians will witness the wonders that Yahweh will do. The word “wonders” (נִפְלְאוֹתָי) could also be translated as “judging”; that which causes trouble or hardship (Swanson 1997: n.p.). Yahweh’s actions against the Egyptians are his judgments against them. When the hand of Pharaoh gives in to the mighty hand of Yahweh, Moses is promised, *Then, after this, he will send you away*. The power of Israel’s God will prevail over all the power of the enemy, and their hearts will be transformed to become accommodating and generous.

God’s action against the Egyptians will work out for the benefit of the Israelites. Yahweh *will put favor in the eyes of the Egyptians* so that they will show the Israelites great generosity. The Egyptians will have a favorable demeanor towards

the Israelites. *When you go, they will not let you leave empty-handed.* The Egyptians will beg the Israelites to take what they have to give. They will so desperately want the Israelites to leave that they will gladly give them whatever they ask for (cf. Ex.11:8). Anticipating this kind of a response from the Egyptians, Yahweh instructs every Israelite *woman to ask from her female neighbor and other women in her house for articles of silver ... gold and clothing* for their sons and daughters. Mackay (2001:83) comments that although the word ‘clothing’ is the general term, here it conveys the idea of valuable clothing, not just ordinary wear. It is this wealth that will later provide for the beauty and richness of the tabernacle to be constructed (Motyer 2005:73).

The contest between Yahweh and Pharaoh will end up with Yahweh as the victor, and Yahweh’s people will plunder the Egyptians. They will not forcefully take anything from the Egyptians. What they will take away with them, is what will be given to them. In this way they *will strip the Egyptians*. Contra Cassuto (1974:44), who sees an upholding of the Lord’s law (Dt. 15:13-14) for a master to send a slave out with provisions, we believe that the motif is that of plundering after victory in war. There is a case for reparations that are made by the Egyptians to their former slaves in this way (Fretheim 1991:67). The Israelites will receive the rewards for their slave-labor and for making them victims of their oppression. Reparations are nevertheless exacted by Yahweh from the Egyptians, by allowing the Israelites to plunder them.

The contents of the message Yahweh gives to Moses is not only aimed at the elders, but for Moses himself; to build up his faith in the one who gives him the plan of what will happen and what he will do. If Moses is able to appreciate the contents of the message he is to give the elders, he should now be willing to be Yahweh’s representative to Pharaoh. Unfortunately it does not turn out that way, and Moses still tries to get out of this particular task that Yahweh has given him to do.

d) Ex. 4:1 – 9 Yahweh Answers Moses and Gives Him Signs.

So far, Yahweh had done nothing, but he said a great deal more. The plan looks good, but it was just that; a plan. Moses is not convinced that he should go, but he nevertheless asks hypothetical questions if he were on the assignment. How will he convince the Israelites that Yahweh really did appear to him? Simply showing that he knows the name of the God of Israel is no proof that Yahweh appeared to him. Moses' initial resistance to Yahweh's commission was gradually overcome by the signs granted him. Moses did not ask for signs, but this is what Yahweh will give him. Yahweh will give him signs that surely will convince them. They are called 'signs' and not 'wonders', and the former normally points to something (Motyer 2005:77). The signs are not explained in our text, and we cannot say with certainty what they point towards, but we know that they are meant to authenticate Moses' claims.

i) 4:1 – 5 Yahweh Answers Moses' Third Objection with a Sign.

Moses' third objection is one that reflects upon his supposed ineffectiveness. He sees himself as unable to convince the Israelites. *What if they do not believe me or listen to me?* Moses' objection is really a matter of trust; not his trust, but their trust in him. It nevertheless betrays his lack of trust in Yahweh at this point. When he says that they will not *listen*, he actually means that having heard they will regard what he says as insignificant. They will not pay attention to what he has to say. Moses is concerned, not with whether Pharaoh will recognize his authority, but, whether Israel will.

What Moses regards as unbelievable, is the fact that Yahweh had appeared to him. Yes, he knows that Yahweh had appeared to him, but how does he prove it to the Israelites? What will he answer if they said to him, '*Yahweh did not appear to you.*'? He surmises that they would ask such a question because they do not believe, nor do they take his testimony as insignificant. His effectiveness among the Israelites depends upon his ability to answer this question.

In answer to Moses' question, Yahweh will now make use of an object lesson, and asks Moses, *What is in your hand?* As was customary for both travelers and shepherds, what Moses had in his hand was *a staff*. In the ancient Near East the staff was also a symbol of leadership. This particular staff would be called the staff of God (Ex.4:20; 17:9), and by that it is not to be conceived magically but as an instrument of God's will (Van Dam 2003:693). In response to Moses' desire for assurance and credibility, God would use this staff in special ways, and Moses would gain confidence through it. Moses needs to see, and he needs to show the people what God can do. God intends to use this staff as an instrument to his glory.

Moses is instructed by Yahweh to take his staff and *throw it to the ground*. It is quite a simple instruction, and Moses is able to easily do as Yahweh instructs. Moses *threw it to the ground*, not knowing what to expect; in fact he did not expect anything. It is interesting to know that the masculine is used in reference to the staff. Is it not perhaps the case that the staff is personified? Such personification could maybe be applied to the fact that it comes to life, because *it became a snake*. Moses did not expect it to turn into a snake. His reflex was one of immediate fleeing. *Moses fled from its presence*; a response not surprising at all. Moses' personal support became something that he fled from.

Moses must have been stunned at the sight he had just experienced. The first sight that stunned him, made him come closer, so that Yahweh warned him not to come any closer. This time he fled and Yahweh instructs him to come closer and to reach out to it. Yahweh said, *Put out your hand and take hold of its tail*. Moses is not only told to come closer to this dangerous (?) snake, but he is asked to do a dangerous thing too. To take hold of the snake's tail is to allow it the freedom to bite one's hand, but Moses obeys. He *put out his hand and took hold of it, and it became a staff in his hand*. The noun, **בְּכַףּוֹ** could also be translated 'in the palm of his hand'.

By now Moses should be convinced to go, as this was a sign to authenticate Moses as God's emissary. The phrase, *put out*, could also be translated 'send out'. The verb *וַיִּצְחַק* is translated as 'to become very powerful' in 2Chr.26:8. Hence, as Moses was to send out his hand to confront and arrest the snake, so Yahweh was sending Moses to confront and 'arrest' Pharaoh for him to become God's instrument. The 'arrest' of Pharaoh, is the 'arrest' of an Egyptian deity. Motyer succinctly states that our text indicates at least that the Lord is the God of transforming power. He can take the ordinary (the staff) and make it the deadly (the snake), but he can also make the deadly subordinated to the man of obedient faith. (2005:78). When Moses obeyed the word of God he mobilized the power and the resources of God, and for the same reason would be more than a match for the Pharaoh.

The whole purpose of this sign is *so that they will believe that Yahweh, the God of their ancestors appeared to Moses*. The unbelievable is made believable; and if they did not believe that Yahweh appeared to Moses, by virtue of this sign, they should. Yahweh did appear to Moses, and by that his mission mandate is to be authenticated before the people. They must receive him, believe him and pay attention to him. If this sign is not sufficient to convince the people, Yahweh is ready to demonstrate more.

ii) 4:6 – 9. Yahweh Gives Moses Two More Signs.

In the previous four verses the noun "hand" occurs four times; in the next two verses it occurs another five times. In our present text it occurs thirteen times in all, indicating that it forms an important theme here in this context. The next sign also involves Moses' hand. Immediately after the sign of the snake, Yahweh gives Moses another sign. As with the first sign, this one is meant to get Israel to accept Moses on the basis that God appeared to him.

After the sign of the snake, Yahweh speaks to Moses *again*. What Yahweh has to say is aimed at the same intention; that is to make the fact that Yahweh appeared to Moses believable to the Israelites. The language is that of entreaty; *Please put your hand into your bosom*. Moses is asked to tuck his hand into his garment in the vicinity of his chest. Moses does what is asked of him. Though we are not told that Moses was instructed to take out his hand, he understood that this is what he must do. The narrator knows that the reason why Yahweh asked Moses to put his hand in his cloak was to demonstrate something *when he brought it out from his cloak*. Bringing his hand out is really the point of the request to put it in. When Moses brought out his hand, *it was like snow*, leprous. The point is that Moses saw that he had a skin disease; though called leprosy it could have been something else. This sign may have anticipated the inflicting of the plague of boils (Enns 2000:103).

The sight of a skin disease could have distressed Moses. It was reckoned that this particular disease was incurable, and if Moses understood that, it would have distressed him even more. We are not told what his reaction was as in the case with the snake. But Yahweh made his point, both to Moses and to the reader. Later, anyone identified with such a skin infection, was to be quarantined. He was also to make a sacrifice for restoration (Lev.14). Immediately Moses is instructed to put his hand back into his cloak; *Return your hand into your cloak*. When Moses returns his hand and brings it out again, *it was as before; like the rest of his flesh*. Moses must have been relieved, as this sign touched his person. At the same time it gave him confidence because he would have to demonstrate this same sign to the Israelites in order for them to believe that Yahweh appeared to him. It would give him credibility with his people.

A third sign was given in case their unbelief persisted. By now Moses should have been satisfied that Yahweh had given him enough to convince the people, but Yahweh volunteers a third sign anyway. Moses did not ask for signs, but signs are given to answer his perceived difficulty. This time, however, Yahweh is repeating Moses' objection, *Then if it is that they do not believe you, nor pay attention*, plus the instruction to use the signs to get them to believe. If they do not believe *the first sign, they will believe the next sign*. Two signs were enough, but Yahweh adds the

third one. With this third sign, he can only expect success in his endeavor to convince them.

The signs must be utilized as proof of Moses' claim. Every sign serves as a witness to what Moses has to say. *If it happens*, indicates the unlikelihood of this, yet it is aimed at giving Moses the further confidence for the task he is commissioned to do. But in the unlikelihood *that they do not believe the second of these signs, nor heed your voice ...*, the third sign is given. This third sign is not demonstrated to Moses as were the other two. He is simply told what to do if he needs to employ another sign. In fact, Moses has to take a step of faith on the basis of Yahweh's previous actions. For the third sign Moses is to *take from the waters of the Nile and pour it on dry ground, and the waters ... shall become blood on the dry ground*. Moses has no reason to doubt that it will happen as Yahweh said it would. Again, this sign anticipates a plague. Even the life-force of Egypt, the Nile, is actually controlled by the God of the slaves.

Moses has the experience of Yahweh's presence; he has received a commission from Yahweh; he has a message to give both the Israelites and the Pharaoh; and he has received several signs. What more does he need?

e) Ex. 4:10 – 17. Yahweh Answers Moses and Gives Him a Helper.

Moses still does not believe that he is the right man for the job. This time he brings the problem he has back to himself. He thinks of himself as incompetent and does not make any room for the possibility that he could become competent, especially since he had received all these assurances, signs and privileges. Fretheim (1991:70) is indeed correct, that signs may dazzle, but they do not lead to belief.

i) 4:10 – 12 Yahweh Answers Moses' Fourth Objection.

Moses seems to be getting pretty desperate to get out of this predicament. He already now begs Yahweh, *Please my Lord, I am not a man of words*. He here

uses the word אֲדֹנָי, as he focuses on Yahweh's authority and majesty. In the Pentateuch this word is often used where God is submissively addressed. Moses says that he is not eloquent. In fact he portrays himself as worse than ineloquent; he restates it in two different ways; *I am heavy of mouth and slow of tongue*. Besides having a speech impediment, he cannot 'think on his feet' so that he can answer immediately when called upon to. He does not feel he has the diplomacy skills to approach Pharaoh. He sees his speech inability as something that comes a long way. Worse still is his accusation; ... *nor have I ever been before and after you spoke to your servant*. The accusation is that Yahweh's appearance to him has not changed anything in this respect for him.

Yahweh uses the creation principle in answering Moses' objection. Yahweh argues that he is the creator by a set of three rhetorical questions. The third question is really the answer to the first two, but the third answer, though not given, can only have an affirmative answer. Because Moses complains that he has a speech impediment, and that he is not eloquent, or sharp, Yahweh asks him the first question, '*Who gave man his mouth?*' Yahweh knows Moses' situation because he created him and therefore his ability, or inability, to speak. The way Moses was is exactly the way Yahweh created him. The second question has the same effect, but it connects the faculties of hearing and sight with that of speech.

The second question is, '*Who makes him to be mute, or deaf, or sighted or blind?*' Moses must be grateful that he can speak; he is not mute, though Yahweh could have made him thus. If Moses had no hearing from birth, he would have had no ability to speak, for speaking comes by the imitation of sounds heard. Even for the faculty of hearing he ought to be grateful. The point made to Moses is that Yahweh made him adequate, and what little he had should not be taken for granted. Nevertheless, God is in control not only of the elements, but he is able to direct mouth, ears and eyes. The creator God is the one who makes, orders, and dispatches all of creation. In Breuggemann's words, "The topic concerns creation and endowment of all humanity (לְאָדָם to adam)" (1994:716)

The last of the three questions (*Is it not I, Yahweh?*), is really the answer to the first two questions. This last question is not given an answer, but there is only one possible answer; 'Yes'. Yahweh is our creator and we owe him our full obedient response when he calls us to act according to his agenda. He is willing to use us the way he has made us, and if necessary, he will specially equip us for the task he gives us.

On the basis of this creation principle, what follows is a logical expectation. There is a sequential relation to what comes now. *So, go now and I myself will be with your mouth. I will instruct you what you must speak.* Yahweh's instruction now is the same one given originally (3:10); 'So now, go' The promise is also the same as originally given (3:12); 'Surely, I will be with you', but because Moses was giving his mouth as an excuse, Yahweh promises to be with his mouth and to tell him what to say. The promise relates exactly to the areas of concern to Moses, namely his lack of eloquence (*I will be with your mouth*) and his inability to respond quickly (*I will instruct you what you must speak*). Yahweh himself is the answer to every objection of Moses.

ii) 4:13 – 17 Yahweh Answers Moses' Final Objection with a Helper.

Moses made all the excuses he could think of, and they were all answered. So, what now? This time Moses flatly refuses to go. Moses said, '*Please Lord; please send whoever else you will send*'. In other words he is saying, "Lord, I beg you to send someone else'. The literal translation of this verse is, '... send by the hand which you send'. The first interjection, *please*, is an exclamation, while the second *please* has a modal connotation. The first calls attention to the second, while the second gives the idea of earnest entreaty. The seriousness of the entreaty is heightened by the use of the title *Lord* (אֱלֹהֵי).

There is a strong case for translating the phrase '*by the hand*' as 'on his side' (e.g. 1Sam.17:22), or 'on his behalf' (e.g. 2Sam.3:12), or 'in his support' (e.g. 2Kg.15:19). In that case a legitimate interpretation could be expressed by the

paraphrase, 'send someone by my side as a help'. Moses preferred a man by his side rather than the divine presence alone. The rest of the story actually supports such a translation. That would also perhaps be a better reason for Yahweh to become angry with Moses. All of God's persuasive powers have been brought to bear, and Moses still is not convinced (Fretheim 1991:73).

For whichever reason, Yahweh becomes *very angry with Moses*. The Hebrew is very graphic at this point, as it literally says that 'the nose of Yahweh became hot'. Yahweh, nevertheless, 'gives in' to Moses, and asks the question, *Why not your brother Aaron, the Levite?* Yes, he would send Aaron with Moses. What is not quite clear is why Aaron is referred to in this way? Surely, if he is Moses' brother than Moses needs not be told that he is a Levite. Many scholars believe that this is an interpolation by a Priestly (P) editor to accentuate Levitical involvement; but this need not be the case.

Yahweh appeals yet again to his omniscience when he comments on Aaron's oratory skills (*I know that surely he can speak well [literally, speak he can speak]*), and that Aaron is coming (*Besides, he is coming out to meet you*), and on what is in Aaron's heart (*and he will rejoice in his heart when he sees you*). Even though Yahweh 'gave in' to his wish, Moses needed to realize that he was being sent by the all-knowing God and He knows what the outcome of all this will be. Moses must place his confidence in Yahweh, rather than in Aaron. Aaron does not enter the scene in our present text.

It is now established that Aaron will be Moses' help. Moses is told: *You shall speak to him and place words in his mouth*. Moses will tell Aaron what to say. Aaron will be Moses' spokesperson to, both, the Israelites and to Pharaoh. Both of them, however, will be Yahweh's spokespeople. Yahweh *will be with their mouth(s)*. That promise is reiterated in the very next sentence: *and I will instruct you (both) what to do*, but here it includes the idea of ordering their actions too. Both the authority of the teacher and the content of his teaching are here in view.

Aaron will be Moses' helper. Yahweh assigned him to a specific task. He is to be Moses' spokesperson, as *he will speak to the people on Moses' behalf*. The commissioning relationship that exists between Yahweh and Moses is the one that now exists between Moses and Aaron. Yahweh says about Aaron, '*... and it shall happen that he shall be as your mouth, and you shall be as his god*'. Aaron will speak exactly as Moses tells him, in the same way as Moses must speak exactly as Yahweh instructs. If the relationships between Aaron and Moses, and between Moses and Yahweh are such, then the recipients will receive the exact message that Yahweh intended for them to hear; whether the people or Pharaoh.

In addition to the mouthpiece, Yahweh provides a hand-piece too. *You must take this staff in your hand, so that you can do signs with it*. Moses is finally willing to go accepting Yahweh's promise that he will be powerful in word and in deed. He will know what to say with authority and to demonstrate that authority with signs and wonders. The staff would become known as "the staff of God" and Moses will act by God's authority. The staff will play an important role in demonstrating it because it will also be the sign of Yahweh's presence with him.

This is a story of human redemption; God heard, saw and knew the plight they were experiencing. God is the one who undertakes to redeem them. God wants to transform their status; from slaves to nationhood. The text does not speak of human commitment to divine ways, and we do not yet see them as a religious community. The only responsibility of humans in our text is that of believing, though by persuasion, and to allow God to lead them out of Egypt to a good and spacious land. They who trust in God are blessed with the benefits of freedom and possessions.

2.4 Theological Reflection.

The world of the text is not evil per se; only as far as Egypt's oppression of Israel causes them to cry in real anguish (3:7). It is called "misery" (3:17). There is also a pre-emptive evil of unbelief by the Israelites and by Pharaoh (3:19; 4:1, 9). The

unbelief of Moses that causes Yahweh to be angry with him is only temporary (4:14).

The world can be changed; at least for the Israelites. How? By redemption; and Yahweh intends to do so. Even though Yahweh creates an opportunity for Pharaoh to change in some minor way, the intention is not *conversionist* or *reformist*. God does not really want Pharaoh to change nor does he want the Egyptian structures to change. The hardening of Pharaoh's heart will facilitate the wondrous signs from God (3:10-11; 19-20). Neither is it *revolutionist* because God does not seek to overthrow the social order, but Pharaoh's obstinacy will finally bring his demise. Here, the Lord only shows the anticipated conquering of the Egyptians by the fact that the Israelites will take plunder (3:21-22).

Even though the initial request for a separation of the people by a three-day journey into the desert to worship (3:18), the intention is not *introversionist* either. Israel is not expected to withdraw from the world. In fact they will receive their own land (3:8, 17) and they must stand as witnesses of God's goodness to ensuing generations and to the nations.

There is definitely a *thaumaturgical* intention. God will by special intervention deliver his people. The deliverance will come by God's personal intervention (3:8 "*I have come down...*") and by His mighty hand (3:20). Moses becomes the extension of God's hand as he is given the ability to do mighty signs to prove that he is God's man (4:2-9).

God is interested for the Israelites to experience a *utopian* setting. They are promised a good and spacious land (3:8). It is a land of plenty; flowing with milk and honey (3:17). It must be for them an existence that will remind them to worship God for generations to come.

Slavery was not a shame, but the fact that they were guests in Egypt, was what made it wrong in this instance. The rights of the Israelites are taken away in slavery and their demeanor is expressed in their cry and anguish. They were being

oppressed to a point of misery. God makes himself judge over the Egyptians and declares them guilty after having weighed the situation (3:16 “*I have seen and have taken stock...*”). Their guilt will be weighed upon by the heavy hand of God (3:20) and the plundering by those who have been wronged and dishonored (3:22). Their slaves will put them to shame.

Ultimately, the honor of Yahweh is at stake. If he is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, then he must be a covenant-keeping God, and he must be able to stand up for his people. By that covenant was Israel’s honor acquired and guaranteed. The Israelites had a historical relationship with Yahweh.

Yahweh wants to have a *dyadic* relationship with Moses. God is the sender and Moses the messenger (3:10, 16). That task in itself seems too big for Moses who actually doubts himself (4:1, 10). It is precisely for the feeling of inadequacy that Moses would need a dyadic relationship with God. God promises relief in this respect when he says, “I will be with you” (3:12) and “I will be with your mouth and instruct you what to say” (4:12, 15).

Aaron is also drawn into this dyadic relationship in a dual way; mainly, that he will speak for Moses, and God will give him the words (4:15-16). Moses exists for God’s service and Aaron for Moses’. God wants this relationship to extend to the Israelites. They are his people because of the covenant with the patriarchs, and they are to receive the benefits of that position (3:6-10). This was an implicit contract binding them to Yahweh and Yahweh to them. Their identity as a people will be marked by this God who has seen their plight, and will fight for them (3:19-20). He will bring them to a good and spacious land, and give it to them as an inheritance (3:8).

Two personalities stand out as individualist, namely Yahweh and Pharaoh, and they are set in conflict with each other. Pharaoh is the king of Egypt, the oppressor. Yahweh will present himself as the king of the Israelites, the oppressed. The ultimate outcome of this challenge is indicated in the statement, “but I know that the king of Egypt will not give in to you. He will not let you go, until by my mighty

hand he does” (3:19). Yahweh will come forth victorious. This challenge will affect the people of both kings. The Egyptians will be plundered on the one hand, and the Israelites will be favored by both their God and their enemies (3:21) on the other.

There seems to be another challenge that is anticipated only. It is the challenge of believability and acceptance. The people had already rejected Moses as a mediator between themselves in conflict. How much more would they reject him as mediator between them and the God of their ancestors? They needed to be convinced that God appeared to Moses (4:1). This was a rare and special privilege and would place Moses on the level of honor with Abraham and Jacob. They will finally believe (4:17). How can Moses expect to convince his enemy (Pharaoh) if he cannot convince his own people? This particular conflict is resolved by the mention of God’s name and by the triple miracle which Moses is instructed to demonstrate before them.

The most exciting prospect is that which indicates the possibility of an interaction between the human and the divine. The initiative, however, will always be with God. He must reveal himself and his ways, else we can have no hope of such an interaction. Here we see the revelation of God to Moses. God has opened himself for interaction with man. In his presence, Moses recognizes the awesome nearness, and covers his face, because it was too risky to look at God. The only thing that God insists upon is for Moses to take off his sandals because the place was holy. The place was only holy because of the presence of a holy God. God imparted holiness to the location. When God’s presence departed, that space once again became common ground (Hartley 2003:421).

God revealed himself to a man whom he was going to commission as his messenger to his people. The visible element of the theophany functioned as something to get Moses’ attention (Breuggemann 1994:712). Actually, God prepared Moses for this project, and yet this interaction made allowance for the free will of the man. He allows Moses to be resistant to his commission. God wanted Moses to aid in providing a solution to the people’s oppression. Moses is expected to partner with God. Every objection raised by Moses’ resistance is

handled with great seriousness, and God met them with divine promises. God promises Moses to be with him, or to be with his mouth. He omnisciently promises Moses success – the people will believe Moses; Pharaoh’s heart will be hardened; the Egyptians will be plagued; the people will be delivered; and the Egyptians will be plundered by them. These assurances emanate from the fact of God’s sovereignty and power. The hand of Pharaoh cannot match the strength of the hand of Yahweh.

God was concerned about the well-being of his own flock. He was willing to reveal his redemptive purpose for Israel. It was no sudden impulse of God (Mackay 2001:61). This redemptive purpose was in line with his covenant relationship with the forefathers. God has an ongoing commitment to his people. When he introduced himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, he linked that redemptive purpose to his historical relationship with them. He reiterated his covenant with his people. He is a covenant-keeping God. He is for his people, even into the future. The redemptive purpose for Israel will eventually overflow to the Gentiles too (Kaiser 1997:570). God is present for his people and for his people alone. That presence is an indication of their blessedness and success among the nations. God reveals himself for Israel’s identity as his possession.

This redemptive purpose will continue as is later witnessed in the Nehemiah story. Nehemiah reminded them of *God’s redemptive purpose for Israel (Neh. 5:8)*. In the past, God redeemed Israel from Egypt; and more recently, He had redeemed them from captivity in Babylon. But this verse informs us that Nehemiah and others of the leading Jews had helped redeem some of their people, and now their fellow Jews were putting people into bondage just to make money. These selfish money lenders were tearing down everything that God and Nehemiah were trying to build up (Wiersbe 1996a:n.p.).

God’s special revelation to Moses seems to be prompted by what he saw Israel going through. He “heard”, he “remembered”, he “saw”, and he “knew” indicate profoundly Yahweh’s involvement in the well-being of his people. God’s people may forget His law, but God remembers His covenant (Wiersbe 1996b:n.p.). He

saw their hardships and revealed himself in response to their plight. God was intimately affected by their suffering. Here the distress of the People is emphasized; as the faithfulness of God to His covenant is impressed upon us (Bulinger 1898:325). Their groans he took as addressed to him, and he responded and “came down” for their benefit. Edersheim (1997:55) comments that though only “a cry,” so to speak, spiritually inarticulate, no intervening period of time divided their prayer from its answer. “And God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them”—literally, He “knew them,” that is, recognized them as the chosen seed of Abraham, and, recognizing, manifested His love towards them.

He was present in the midst of their suffering because he saw, heard and knew their suffering, and came down to deliver them. Their social situation had to be transformed from oppression to freedom (Breuggemann 1994:678). Redemption is the kind of interaction that brings transformation. The deliverance of God is finally not only from something, it is to something. They will move from redemption to creation; to a new way of life.

The Egyptian oppression was nevertheless necessary for God to reveal his power in his work of redemption. God will deal with the Egyptians according to their culpability. He will act on behalf of the victims. His redemption will be quick and decisive, leaving the Egyptians empty-handed. We see that human wickedness moves God to action. He will show himself as being full of holy zeal against wickedness, yet willing to show mercy to anyone who repents and submits to his sovereignty. Yahweh creates an opportunity for Pharaoh to change, and the people of Israel will experience God by what he does in their future.

When Moses was at Horeb, the Mountain of God, God appeared to him in a strange sight. Horeb was known as the mountain of revelation (Motyer 2005:48). The appearance was a self-disclosure of the divine. When Moses inspected it, the Angel of the Lord, who is the Lord himself, spoke to him from the burning bush. This was a supernatural flame of fire accompanying the revelation of God; also a

precursor to the theophany for the people's benefit (Enns 2000:96). The initiative changes from Moses to God. God allows Moses to be in his presence. He who inspects is now the one who is confronted. Moses became the discoverer of God, and of God's intention. The Presence means grace and sanctification. God's presence is an indication of his approval of those to whom he appears. The appearances of God are beneficent in its nature. God is visible but must not be seen (Noth 1959:38). He is both a self-revealing and a self-concealing God. Concealment relates to God's holiness.

The messenger of God was in dialogue with God; he must know God. Moses realizes this was a necessity for any possible prophetic office. Moses wants to know God's intention by asking his Name. God's name is his story; it summed up who he was. The question about God's Name comes up because of his presence (Thomson 1988:1751). When God gave his name he was willing to join the historical community and break the distance typical of an unknown entity (Fretheim 1991:65). The divine presence is linked with knowledge about God. Even though Moses learns the Name by using a hypothetical objection to his call; he knows that the Name authenticates the call. The revelation of a present God must serve as an assurance to Moses and to the people (Davis 1972:39).

When God revealed his name, it was in the context of dialogue. The revelation of the Name becomes an unveiling of God's sovereignty. The disclosure of Yahweh's personal Name, is to disclose his own person. It is a name containing the full richness and honor of the one naming himself. It is the eternal name of God. God is self-contained and incomprehensible. He speaks to Moses as king about a people he is responsible for when he says; *bring my people out of Egypt*. "I am" is the answer to these people's question, which Moses asked on their behalf. The theological implication of the Name for them was the focus of continuing worship. They were to remember him by that name for all their generations to come. Zimmerli (1982) notices that the expression, "I am Yahweh your God" is the long form, and is preferred in paraenetic statements.

The one sent will be endowed with the power of God. The prophet must be convinced of God's power present in him. More than that, he discovers the power of God, being allowed to appropriate this power in the execution of his commission. He was going to be God's vehicle of power to the coming deliverance. God gives his man power so that the people may believe. He endows him with three signs that will convince them of the messenger's authenticity. The Presence also authenticated the identity and the commands of Yahweh, as it authenticated the present programme of Yahweh. The messenger will be able to do signs and wonders, and the staff of God in his hand will give him the confidence, assurance and credibility he needed. The staff was a transforming power able to be turned into a living thing (Motyer 2005:78). Every sign that Moses will do only serves to give witness that Yahweh is omnipotent and irresistible. God's self-revelation shows his magnificence.

God reveals himself to Moses as the creator who redeems. The sovereign Lord reminds Moses that he created man's mouth, and he makes a man mute. Moses' inadequacy can be met by the creator God being with his mouth. God was able to make Moses new for the task of being God's prophet. Yahweh met every inadequacy of Moses with a pledge of his own sufficiency (Janzen 1979:234). Moses must rest in Yahweh's creative presence; the creator God is the one who makes, orders and dispatches all of creation to his ends.

God reveals himself to be a patient God. God's anger is even tempered with patience when Moses requests that another be sent. Throughout, as Moses raised his five (what might seem to us frivolous) objections, God responds with sensitivity and seriousness. The objections even border unbelief and contradiction to God's assurances. Yet, God persists in incorporating Moses as a partner in his redemptive intentionality towards Israel. Childs (1985:52) succinctly states that when God charged Moses, "Come, I send you to Pharaoh ... (3:10)", and he resisted the command, God was willing even to negotiate for his plan until the real ground for Moses' resistance emerged as unbelief. In sum, God appears throughout the Old Testament as a person with a will which he freely communicates. In spite of Moses' resistance, God assigned him a unique role

within Israel; a role which includes every other office: deliverer, lawgiver, prophet, priest, psalmist, sage and mediator of the Covenant.

Finally, Yahweh does not act according to deistic principles; getting things started and leaving it to continue on its own. He promises to be with Moses and Aaron all the way. He will not only be with their mouths, but he will teach them there and then what to do and to say. He will order their very actions and words.

Let us summarize the theological significance of this text according to Fretheim (1991:52-53):

The recognition of holiness (3:6) does not lead to passivity in the presence of God ... the divine holiness is of such character that it invites rather than repels human response ... God does not demand a self-effacing Moses but draws him out and works with him “warts and all” ... It is Moses’ persistence that occasions a greater fullness in the divine revelation. Human questions find an openness in God and leads to fuller knowledge ... God treats the dialogue with Moses with integrity and honors his insights ... God is not the only one with something important to say. God will move with Moses, even adapting original divine plans (the role of Aaron; see at 4:10-17) ... God always aims for the best in every situation, but God must often work with options that are less than the best (witness Aaron’s failure in chap.32).

The sense-perceptible representations of God’s presence come in a variety of forms in which he reveals himself. This variety is an indication of his freedom. The appearances of God are for the most spontaneous and effective. God may appear in any place and at any time without any manipulation from outside himself. His holiness distinguishes him from his creation, but his sovereignty allows him not to be limited by the distinction. When God appears in theophanies he limits himself to specific and particular forms within the context of the creation he has made. God is nevertheless supernatural in every sense.

The Old Testament also interpreted this narrative in a particular way. Many scholars see this as a call narrative which is paradigmatic of a prophetic call. Joshua was promised that as Yahweh was with Moses, so too he would be with him. The call of Jeremiah, the prophet, in Jer.1:7-9 seems to follow the paradigm of Moses’ call. Like with Moses, Jeremiah presents his inadequacies. Keil and

Delitzsch (2002: 27) comments that the divine call throws Jeremiah into terror. Knowing well his too great weakness for such an office, he exclaims: Ah, Lord Yahweh! I do not know how to speak. Moses, however, was not ready of speech, he lacked the gift of utterance; Jeremiah, on the other hand, only thinks himself not yet equal to the task by reason of his youth and want of experience. Jeremiah's youthful bashfulness and his shy unwillingness to speak before high and mighty personages stand as hindrances in the way of his accepting God's call. The Lord will be with him, so that he needs have no fear for any man. The promise of Presence again served as a motivation to act without fear in the obedience of God's commission. God himself solves the prophet's problem by touching his mouth implying that God would give him *utterance*, notwithstanding *his* inability to speak (Jamieson *et.al* 1997:n.p.). God empowers whom he sends. This, we see was the case with Gideon, Isaiah and Ezekiel too.

Our theological reflection cannot ignore the New Testament interpretation of aspects in our text. We must consider this in our reflection. We find a citation of Ex.3:6, 15 and 16 in Mt. 22:32 and its parallel passages in Mark 12:26 and Luke 20:37. The Sadducees came to Jesus with a question about the law of the kinsman-redeemer, hoping to trap Him in His doctrine of the resurrection, and He answered them out of the books of Moses and spoke of both angels and the resurrection (Freedman 1998:460). We may glean three emphases in our Lord's use of it. Firstly, it is used in a way where it chiefly undergirds the doctrine of the resurrection. Secondly, it brings to bear the power of God, because the Sadducees are accused of unbelief in this regard. Thirdly, the dead as we know them are not excluded from a relationship with God. Our Lord highlights the fact that the statement is in the present; "I am" the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Wiersbe succinctly puts it "Our Lord was not content to refute the Sadducees' foolish views about the future life. He also wanted to answer their claim that there was no resurrection; *and He did it by referring to Moses!* He knew that Moses was the only authority they would accept (1996c:n.p.)

In Acts 7:30-35 Stephen makes reference to the story in Ex.3:2-10, showing God's calling of Moses to lead the very people who rejected him earlier. In the same way,

this Jesus whom they have killed has been approved of God. He quotes numerous portions of the Septuagint text directly and summarizes others (Polhill 2001:197). This Moses whom they refused, saying, *who made you a ruler and a judge...* (Ex.2:14) —Here, again, “*the stone which the builders refused is made the head of the corner*” (Ps 118:22). This is quoted to remind his Moses-worshipping audience of the grand testimony of their faithful lawgiver, that *he himself was not the last and proper object of the Church’s faith, but only a humble precursor and small model of Him to whom their absolute submission was due* (Jamieson, *et.al.* 1997: n.p.). As Moses was appointed to be deliverer of the Israelites, so Jesus would be the deliverer of all who believe in him. It becomes obvious that Stephen had a freedom to paraphrase and to alter slightly the sequence of the historical events for the purpose of his message.

In Hebrews 11:16 we are reminded of the promise in Ex.3:8. The promise of God provided hope for the people who were subjected to tremendous suffering. The writer to the Hebrews confirmed that God was faithful and worthy of our faith. Like Philo, this writer believes that earth is not the home of the righteous; heaven is. But he envisions this idea in more traditionally Jewish terms than Philo, looking for a *future* city (Keener 1993:n.p.) His word will come true. In fact, the faith of those who please God, was so strong that the faithful were even willing to face persecution and still remain unwavering in their faith in the God of Israel. Christian believers do well to exercise their faith unwaveringly.

In Revelation we have a strong allusion, especially to Ex.3:14. The Name of God is stated in attributes; he is the eternal God; the first and the last; the alpha and omega; and the faithful one (1:4; 1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 16:5). That he is eternal is admitted in that he is the one “who was, and is, and is to come “. He is therefore the trustworthy one. While the Revelation texts correlate more with Isa.41:4, it must be noted that the latter is based upon Exodus 3:14. God is there, and he is there to redeem his people. God’s activity for his people is past, present and future.

Philo. A first-century Jewish philosopher committed to both Judaism and Greek thought; he lived in Alexandria, Egypt, and held a position of great influence and prestige in the Jewish community there.

Most important is that many of these verses actually refer to Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is God; the redeeming God. He is the eschatological messiah. He is the King of kings, and Lord of lords. He holds the keys of death, and in him is life eternal. Using Paul's words, he is the new creation because of the resurrection.

2 B. THE PRESENT GOD PROMISES DELIVERANCE.

Breuggemann (1994:723) aptly states that the two governing formulas “Let my people go” and “You shall know I am Yahweh” together join the social and theological issues. The imperative of freedom and the indicative of sovereignty cannot be separated in the rhetoric or in the faith of Israel. The indicative of sovereignty focuses on the power struggle between Yahweh and Pharaoh. The statement also bears on Moses and the Israelites. For Pharaoh, it will mean his demise, and for Moses and the people, their deliverance.

Moses must have been confused, because it seemed to him like Pharaoh was still in control. Pharaoh bluntly denied any knowledge of Yahweh and would not bow to his demands in any way. In fact, he now acted spitefully against the children of Israel and increased their workload, so that it would really become unbearable for them. In Cassuto’s words (1967:73), Moses is disillusioned and reproachful because he had learnt that his initial action had brought fresh calamity on the heads of his oppressed brethren. Moses foregoes the second audience with Pharaoh and comes into God’s presence protesting that God had not rescued his people, but had in fact caused them to be worse off. Even Moses’ faith became weak (Harlow 1969:16), and the fact that Moses and Aaron did not return to Pharaoh to present the complaint caused by their original request is a further indication of the severity of their failure (Durham 1987:69).

His protest came from the expectation that God would act faster and more decisively with the Egyptian king. He expected faster results. Pharaoh’s whole purpose was to break Israel’s hope of any freedom (Cole 1973:82). What added to the problem was that the foremen took their cry to Pharaoh, but unlike God, he neither hears nor answers. The obvious intent of the foremen’s visit to Pharaoh was to undo the harm that was brought upon Israel by the intercession of Moses and Aaron (Durham 1987:69). They gained no concession from Pharaoh. While, even according to the foremen Pharaoh’s treatment of the Israelites was unfair, he remained unmoved at the possibility of an uprising. Instead his response was harsh and unkind. This response actually set them against Moses and

consequently against God, and Moses himself was quickly caught up in the prevalent gloom (Clements 1972:35).

While the divine plan at first appears to be thwarted and the situation temporarily worsens, God is by it busy to do according to that plan. The Israelite foremen had no conception of the grandeur and far-reaching scope of God's plans – for that matter neither had Moses (Ellison 1982:33). Now, what Moses really needed was the kind of reassurance that only Yahweh could give him. Yahweh needed to remind Moses that the redemption to come was going to be more glorious and more meaningful in the light of its preceding difficulties. That is in fact also what he received from Yahweh. Yahweh assured him that he had not forgotten his covenant with Abraham, and that the covenant would be established with the Israelites after their miraculous rescue.

From the outset, the essential purpose of this narrative is to make plain the real and active presence of the incomparable Yahweh (Durham 1987:70). Moses and the people needed to trust in the present Lord. Their patient waiting and enduring will be rewarded by a grand redemption and a lasting relationship with the God of all creation himself. This was fairly easy for Moses to accept, but whether he could convince the people; this he doubted. Moses was really asked to present the people with the hope of redemption, and the prospect of them being showcased as the people of God. What a glorious hope, and what a wonderful prospect to have!

Exodus 5:22 – 6:12.

1. Translation:

5:22 And Moses returned⁵³ to Yahweh and he said, “Lord⁵⁴, why have you brought injury⁵⁵ upon this people? Is this why you sent⁵⁶ me?”

⁵³ TWOT indicates that this is the 12th most used verb in the Old Testament (over 1050 times in its various nuances). It is often understood as repentance.

- 23 From the time I came before Pharaoh to speak in your Name, he has done evil to this people, and you have not delivered⁵⁷ your people with your delivering⁵⁸.
- 6:1 And Yahweh said to Moses, “Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh. Because of a mighty hand he will send⁵⁹ them away, and by a mighty hand he will drive⁶⁰ them out of his land.”
- 2 And God spoke to Moses and he said to him, “I am Yahweh.”
- 3 “I presented⁶¹ myself to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as ‘God Almighty’, and by my name, Yahweh, I did not become known to them.”
- 4 “And also, I have established⁶² my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their sojourning, where they have dwelt in.”
- 5 And also, I have heard⁶³ the groan⁶⁴ of the sons of Israel, whom the Egyptians are enslaving, and I remembered my covenant.”
- 6 “Therefore, say to the sons of Israel, ‘I am Yahweh, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. I will rescue you from your bondage, and I will redeem you with outstretched arm and with great judgments⁶⁵.’”
- 7 “And I will take you as my people, and I will be your God⁶⁶; and you will know that I am Yahweh, your God, the one bringing you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.”
- 8 “And I will carry⁶⁷ you to the land which I have sworn by my uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and it I will give to you as a possession⁶⁸. I am Yahweh.”
- 9 And Moses spoke this to the sons of Israel, but they did not listen to him because of a spirit⁶⁹ of discouragement and because of their cruel bondage.
- 10 And Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying

⁵⁴ In our case, we prefer to translate אֲדֹנָי as Lord, and יְהוָה as Yahweh.

⁵⁵ Or “trouble” or “evil”; we did not choose “trouble” as our choice actually highlights the accusation against God. It seems to accuse God of maliciousness.

⁵⁶ This word is so translated 566 times in the AV. The understanding of this word is that of sending as an official. Moses sees himself as sent on an official mission as God’s representative.

⁵⁷ A physical snatching away can be understood by יִהְיֶה

⁵⁸ Literally, “...to deliver not you have delivered ...”

⁵⁹ “send away” has a truer sense than “release” in that the former is more urgent.

⁶⁰ What we say in footnote 8 is really demonstrated here.

⁶¹ This is a more deliberate action than the rendering “appeared”

⁶² Alternatively, “set up”

⁶³ To listen intently. It is also translated as “obey” (81 times) and can speak of God’s response as a type of obedience to their call of groaning.

⁶⁴ The word נִאֲקָה appears only 4 times, and in every occurrence it is translated as “groan”, which is, an intense struggle.

⁶⁵ More than just acts of judicial significance; it means to govern, rule and control with heavy-handedness.

⁶⁶ This is the core of the covenant relationship between God and his people.

⁶⁷ Alternatively, “bring”

⁶⁸ Or “inheritance”. There is the double force, to inherit and to dispossess. This is a major benefit of the covenant. To become a nation they had to gain possession of a land. In this land they would develop as a holy nation.

⁶⁹ This has reference to their demeanor.

- 11 “Go⁷⁰ and tell¹⁹ Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, to let the sons of Israel go⁷¹ from his land.
12 And Moses spoke in the presence⁷² of Yahweh saying, “Behold, the sons of Israel have not listened to me. So why will Pharaoh listen to me; and I am unskilled in speech⁷³.”

2. Exegesis:

The relationship was such that Moses could enter the presence of Yahweh “at will”. In fact Moses even felt he had the right to out-rightly challenge Yahweh. In this interim narrative, between promise and deliverance, the demoralized foremen succeeded in demoralizing Moses. He accused Yahweh of evil. He expresses both confusion and disillusionment about Yahweh’s intention and ability to do what he has promised. If Moses found himself to be hopeless, what would be the state of the people who are suffering at the hand of Pharaoh, who had begun a policy of escalation, believing that more repression (Breuggemann 1994:729) would break the people’s faith in Yahweh and Moses?

Yahweh provides Moses with motivation to continue as his agent before the people and before Pharaoh. What motivated Moses is Yahweh’s promise of a deliverance that will leave Pharaoh powerless and themselves free. Moses and the people needed to trust in the Lord. Their patient waiting and enduring will be rewarded by a grand redemption and a lasting relationship with the God who was in covenant with them.

To accept this promise was fairly easy for Moses, but whether he could convince Pharaoh and motivate the people; this he seriously doubted. If the people would not believe, how could he expect Pharaoh to budge? Right now the Israelites felt like they were a people of reproach. Again, Moses had no doubt that he was not up to the task that Yahweh had given him.

⁷⁰ Both instances are in the Imperative mood.

⁷¹ Alternatively, “...send away the sons of Israel...”

⁷² לְפָנָי literally, “to the face”

⁷³ Literally, “uncircumcised of lips”

Now, we shall do an exegesis, looking first at the issue of *genré*; then, at the structural issues of this pericope; and finally, by providing a fairly comprehensive commentary on this text. We shall then derive theological principles from our text for later application in our dissertation.

2.1 *Genré*

It may be said that the literary typing of this text is generally classified as *narrative*. It certainly sets out to recount the story of Moses' continued relationship with Yahweh in his role as deliverer. The story tells us that Moses had his first disappointment with Yahweh. He easily complains because he was really unwilling to be Israel's deliverer, but that he continues on the same basis that he received his call; on the basis of the promise that Yahweh, the God of his forefathers, will deliver them by spectacular means. This promise, however, does not completely satisfy him, because in his mind the Israelites will not believe him; nor will Pharaoh.

This traditional story is about Yahweh as the protagonist, and Moses, his agent, as the heroic characters about to save the Israelites from the cruel oppression of their Egyptian overlords and Pharaoh, the antagonist, is continued here. Any long heroic story is also called a *saga*, and so we classify this story as *saga*. This *saga* is told in *prose* format and includes *report* and *dialogue*.

2.2 *Structural Considerations*

We have said before that we will accept the Exodus text purely as the final matured text accepted by the Israelite religious community. We shall therefore consider only the biblical text in its final form, not overlooking the scholarly consensus that this text is assigned to a Priestly source (Childs 1974:111). We will concede to Childs' comment that the present form is theological by nature. Our stance here is to consider the text synchronically as we accept the unity of the final text.

Most commentators set the limits of our present pericope as we have it (Ex. 5:22 – 6:12). Others include verse 13 of chapter 6 and thus bring Aaron into our present section. We are not convinced that Aaron forms part of this present story. Others include verse 13 because they see in this text a parallel to the call narrative, and in that case make a strong case for the documentary theory. Our present text cannot be further divided without affecting the story. This story is circumscribed by the section 4:27 – 7:5. The unity of this text is demonstrated by the specific dialogue between Moses and Yahweh.

2.2.1 Text Outline.

a.	5:22 – 23	Yahweh Approached, Accused and Interrogated by Moses.	A
b.	6:1 – 8	Yahweh's Response to Moses	B
	i)	6:1 The Promise of a Spectacular Deliverance	a
	ii)	6:2 - 4 Yahweh Recounts His Covenant	b
	iii)	6:5a Yahweh Acknowledges Israel's State	c
	iv)	6:5b Yahweh Remembers His Covenant	b'
	v)	6:6 - 8 The Promise of Deliverance restated	a'
c.	6:9	Israel's Response to Moses	B'
d.	6:10 – 12	Yahweh Interrogated by a Skeptical Moses	A'
	i)	6:10-11 Yahweh's Instruction to Moses	
	ii)	6:12 Moses' Skepticism	

It can be noticed that the outline given above has some introverted parallel structure. Though not perfect, but a chiasmic structure is visible. The fact that such parallelism is obvious is also an indication of the unity of this present text, and that the pericope is more likely to be bounded by verse 12 rather than verse 13.

One can even find some parallel between the details of A and A': in both the people and Pharaoh are mentioned; the interrogation used is found in both sections; both use the interrogative 'why'; the presence of Yahweh is the location

of both sections; in both the sending of Moses is mentioned; in A Moses talks about his sending, and in A' he is told by Yahweh to 'go and tell'.

2.2.2 Linguistic, Grammatical and Rhetorical Characteristics.

2.2.2.1 Important Recurring Verbs (by stem)

Stem	Meaning	Occurrences	Verse	Translated as
דבר	speak	6	5:23 6:2 6:9 6:10 6:11 6:12	to <i>speak</i> in your Name God <i>spoke</i> to Moses Moses <i>spoke</i> this to Yahweh <i>spoke</i> to Moses Go and <i>tell</i> Pharaoh Moses <i>spoke</i> in the
שמע	hear	4	6:5 6:9 6:12 6:12	I have <i>heard</i> the groan they did not <i>listen</i> to Israel have not <i>listened</i> how will Pharaoh <i>listen</i> to
שלח	send	3	5:22 6:1 6:11	why you <i>sent</i> me? he will <i>send</i> them away <i>let</i> the sons of Israel <i>go</i>
בוא	go	3	5:23 6:8 6:11	the time I <i>came</i> before I will <i>carry</i> you to Go and tell Pharaoh
נצל	deliver	3	5:23 5:23 6:6	you have not <i>delivered</i> with your <i>delivering</i> and I will <i>rescue</i> you
נתן	give	3	6:4 6:8 6:8	to <i>give</i> them the land to <i>give</i> to Abraham and I will <i>give</i> it to you
רעע	do evil	2	5:22 5:23	you have <i>brought injury</i> he has <i>done evil</i> to
ראה	see	2	6:1 6:3	you will <i>see</i> what I <i>presented</i> myself

Stem	Meaning	Occurrences	Verse	Translated as
יָדַעַ	know	2	6:3 6:7	I did not become <i>known</i> and you have <i>known</i> that I
יָצֵאַ	bring	2	6:6 6:7	I Yahweh will <i>bring</i> you the one <i>bringing</i> you out

2.2.2.2 Important Recurring Words (by stem).

Stem	Meaning	Occurrences	Verse	Translated as
מָה	why?	3	5:22 5:22 6:12	<i>Why</i> have you brought Is this <i>why</i> you sent me <i>why</i> will Pharaoh listen
חֲזָקַ	mighty	2	6:1 6:1	of my <i>mighty</i> hand he by my <i>mighty</i> hand he
בְּרִיתַ	covenant	2	6:4 6:5	set up my <i>covenant</i> with I remembered my <i>covenant</i>
סְבָלוֹתַ	burden	2	6:6 6:7	under the <i>burdens</i> of from under the <i>burdens</i> of

2.2.2.3 Observable Thematic Progression.

5:22	why	send						
	why							
5:23			speak	come		deliver		
						deliver		
6:1		send						mighty
								mighty
6:2			speak					
6:3							know	
6:4				hear			give	covenant
6:5								covenant
6:6					bring	deliver		burden
6:7					bring		know	burden
6:8					carry		give	
							give	
6:9			speak	listen				
6:10			speak					
6:11		go	speak					
6:12	why		speak	listen				
				listen				

The higher frequencies of the words *speak* and *listen* prove that the present pericope is a dialogue. Also we may deduce that the *covenant* is the central motivation of the deliverance promised in this particular dialogue.

2.3 Commentary.

Moses is seemingly at the end of his rope. The dual defeat of the previous verses, where both Pharaoh and the Israelites want nothing to do with him (Enns 2000:171) weighed heavily upon Moses. The Israelites told Moses that he was to blame for their calamity. The foremen did not view the deprivation of their lost security as an aspect of the battle waged by God against Pharaoh on their behalf (Buttrick 1952:887). Moses did not answer them. He did not defend himself or Aaron. The only answer can come from Yahweh.

The Israelites called upon God's judgment believing that Moses and Aaron were to blame. Their very call upon God to judge while complaining showed that they had

no confidence in God and his power to save (Keil & Delitzsch 1968:466). Anyway, Moses is now about to appear before the Judge, not to be judged, but with the audacity to judge. What he was doing was calling into question God's character. Yahweh's answer is at the heart of this passage, which reflects the keys to this passage. According to Durham (1987:76) they are precisely (1) the fourfold occurrence of the auto-confessional phrase **אֲנִי יְהוָה** ; (2) the repeated references to the covenant relationship (6:4, 5, 6, 7, 8); and (3) the four references to the forthcoming mighty acts in Israel's behalf, including, above all, the exodus itself (6:6, 7, 11, 13)

a) Ex. 5:22-23. Yahweh Approached, Accused and Interrogated by Moses.

And Moses returned to Yahweh. Did he physically return to the Mountain of God? Did he simply return to the presence of God? Did he return to God in prayer? These are all valid questions to ask. That he returned to the mountain is highly unlikely and is not specifically stated in the text. One thing is certain, that Moses met the foremen in Egypt as they came from Pharaoh's presence. They seemed to have been in the proximity of the meeting of the Israelites with the Pharaoh.

That Moses "returned" to the Lord also shows a movement away from where he met the foremen. There seems to be a physical motion to the point of departure. Stuart (2006:168) differs with us as he feels that Moses' return to the LORD is not a reference to his going to a particular location, but that it refers to prayer. Since the previous talk that Moses had with God was not a prayer, we reckon that the return was to the presence of God at least. The ensuing dialogue supports the idea of Moses being in the presence of Yahweh. What is vital is simply the fact that the conversation takes place (Enns 2000:172).

Durham (1987:67) uses the translation ... *Moses turned on Yahweh* ..., indicating the nuance of him being set against Yahweh. We have no problem with this view because Moses does in fact want to blame Yahweh. This does not necessarily

contradict the matter of the location; being where God is. Moses confronts Yahweh because now the exodus seems more remote than ever. Moses, however, is still the mediator between God and his people (Noth 1962:56). We disagree with Calvin's view; that Moses was returning to the Lord in a bad sense for forsaking his office. He left his people in order to go back to God (n.d.: 123).

The conversation has begun. *Lord, why have you brought injury upon this people?* The word for Lord is אֲדֹנָי (*adonay*), which generally has reference to the divine's authority and majesty as ruler. Only very rarely does it have reference to human superiors. Here it is a way of addressing Yahweh with reverence. So, while Moses is interrogating Yahweh, it is not done disrespectfully.

This is the first interrogatory *why* that Moses brings up. Moses blames God for the calamity that the Israelites are experiencing. The foremen blamed Moses and now Moses blames Yahweh. We have selected *injury* instead of *evil* or *wickedness* because the latter two words have a moral implication. We agree with Kaiser (1990:339), who says that Moses did not directly accuse Yahweh with authoring evil, for the idiom only means that God allowed and permitted such trouble to happen. Moses is focused on the condition of the people rather than on the action of Yahweh. We do not think that Moses intends merely to accuse the Lord of maliciousness, even though such a meaning is possible. The narrative puts the question in this way to draw our attention to the fact that God allows dialogue of this nature. For now the question goes unanswered and Yahweh's intentions are misunderstood.

When the foremen accused Moses, they left the impression that Pharaoh was correct. When Moses accuses God, he also leaves the impression that Pharaoh is not to blame. Besides that, he is declaring his own innocence in response to the charge laid against him. The only one responsible must be Yahweh, for he acted in Yahweh's name.

The next question takes the focus away from the people and places it on Moses who is God's representative. *Is this why you have sent me?* This question can also be put as, *Why did you send me?* Moses understood himself as sent on an official mission as Yahweh's representative.

Moses was sent with the one message to Pharaoh; "let my people go". It states the one overriding agenda for emancipation (Breuggemann 1994:722). Emancipation does not seem to be anywhere in sight. In the next verse Moses actually states with exasperation that Yahweh has not delivered.

From the time I came before Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has done evil to this people.... Moses has been to Pharaoh and gave him the imperative from Yahweh. As one sent by Yahweh he spoke as Yahweh's representative. He spoke in Yahweh's name; that is, with Yahweh's authority. When Pharaoh denied any accountability to Yahweh, he actually began a process of increased oppression in defiance and in spite of Yahweh's sovereignty. Pharaoh brought injury with evil intention against the people of God, and this action was begun when Moses approached him in Yahweh's name. The people accused Moses of this injury and Moses accused Yahweh. Pharaoh was actually the guilty one.

Now Moses states with exasperation...*and you have not delivered your people with your delivering.* The statement is literally *to deliver not you have delivered*. The word used for "snatch" or "deliver" (נצל) means to drag out of danger at the last minute and to be in a more favorable circumstance. Rhetorically, the word appears thrice in the text, and its frequency establishes its significance, and the double use in this verse is a rhetorical device that indicates Moses' exasperation on the one hand, and Yahweh's failure on the other. But Pharaoh's *sending* (שלח) in 6:1 and 6:11 is actually Yahweh's deliverance.

There is no doubt that this text is about Yahweh's promised deliverance and the ensuing covenant establishment. By the first, Pharaoh will know who Yahweh is, and by the second action, the Israelites will know their God. The second is built

upon the first. There can be no covenant people without that people being redeemed. The bridge between the concepts of deliverance and covenant is created by the word *give* (נָתַן); the giving of the land. The very acts of Yahweh *carrying* (בָּוֹא) and *bringing* (בָּרָא) the people to the land (6:7 and 6:8) are expressions of his deliverance.

Here Moses accuses Yahweh of not doing what he promised to do; that is to rescue Israel. This is an intense accusation against Yahweh, who should have been the decisive player (Breuggemann 1994:728). The repetition of the verb here in verse 23 emphasizes Yahweh's failure. Moses still had to learn that if his people were to be the possession of the Lord rather than of Pharaoh, there must be a complete end to Pharaoh as a resource for them (Buttrick 1952:888). How will Yahweh tell Moses this very important truth? The Judge, who is the accused, must now respond.

b) Ex. 6:1-8 Yahweh's Response to Moses.

The seeming defeat is actually the beginning of Yahweh's victory over Pharaoh. This text witnesses to the power of Yahweh on behalf of the Israelites, even in the face of seeming defeat through the obstinacy of Pharaoh. Pharaoh's power to resist will soon give way for the mighty hand of Yahweh to prevail. Not only is Pharaoh's future at stake, but more importantly the future of the Israelites is at stake. Will they be established as the people of God?

So far Moses has been the only one to speak. He spoke rather abruptly and leaves us without a doubt that he is truly frustrated. What Moses thinks has not begun has indeed begun as he is soon to see; Yahweh's work on Pharaoh is already under way. It already began with Moses' first confrontation with Pharaoh (Durham 1987:70).

In this extended speech of God, we have the fullest self-disclosure of God that is offered in the exodus narrative (Breuggemann 1994:733). This account does not supplement the account of Ex.3-4 because it is much briefer and has an entirely different emphasis. Here we have no theophany and there is no reference to signs of any kind. We are therefore reluctant to call this a calling of Moses in the same sense as that in chapters 3 and 4. We however concede that a general framework of the call narrative may be identified.

i) Ex.6:1 The Promise of a Spectacular Deliverance.

And Yahweh said to Moses, completes the prospect of a dialogue. Yahweh is present and responding as he speaks to Moses. In chapter 5 it appeared as though Yahweh was absent because he was silent. The dialogue, however, is still private and Moses is Yahweh's only audience. In the future the people will request that Yahweh's communications remain private; he must speak to Moses and Moses must speak to them. It must be noticed that Yahweh does not answer Moses' questions.

Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh. Yahweh's address is to Moses in the second person singular. Moses is privy to the plan of Yahweh. He is invited to behold the acts of Yahweh with respect to Pharaoh. As Durham (1987:70) puts it, Pharaoh's recalcitrance is but one ingredient in Yahweh's plan. Yahweh is going to use Pharaoh's obstinacy to bring about his salvation. Though Pharaoh has declared that he will not let the Israelites go he will actually do so. In fact he will drive them out as though this is his passionate desire, but it will be Yahweh acting heavily upon him. God was already working on Pharaoh.

Because of a mighty hand he will send them away.... Pharaoh will be compelled. He will be unable to resist the mighty hand of Yahweh. Pharaoh will act by a mighty hand; not his own but that of Israel's God. Even though there is no pronominal indication of whose hand is referred to, we, contra Breuggemann (1994:729)

believe that the conjunction וְ is causative and that Pharaoh is caused to send them away, and thus not his own hand. It is nevertheless finally Yahweh who mobilizes Pharaoh to become engaged albeit recalcitrantly in the mighty work of liberation. When he sends the Israelites away he will be performing according to Yahweh's behest.

And by a mighty hand he will drive them out of his land. By interpreting the first phrase as referring to Yahweh's mighty hand, the second mention of it seems to be extraneous or redundant. There is debate as to whose hand it is. We believe that the repetition functions to emphasize the mighty act of Yahweh's redemption. The language is in any case an idiom connoting "by force" (Stuart 2006:169). It must be admitted though that the ensuing strong verb opens the possibility of a reference to Pharaoh. Pharaoh will drive them out with force. In the context of the contest between Yahweh and Pharaoh we get the sense of Yahweh's mighty hand overcoming the heavy hand of Pharaoh and of the Egyptians.

It is just as possible that the mighty hand of Pharaoh is actually the mighty hand of Yahweh when it acts according to Yahweh's will. In any case, it is Yahweh's mighty hand that will force Pharaoh to urgent and decisive action. Moses was told that Pharaoh would not obey at first until he is forcibly compelled to do so. *He will drive them out of his land.* Calvin (nd.: 124) puts it succinctly: He who today refuses to let you depart, will not only set you free, but will even expel you from his kingdom. There will be resoluteness about Pharaoh's action. Noth says: Yahweh will prove himself so powerful that Pharaoh will 'send Israel out', indeed he will even 'drive them out with a strong hand' (1962:56).

ii) Ex.6:2-4. Yahweh Recounts His Covenant.

God's reassurance to Moses continues with covenant language. What he is going to do, he does because of the covenant he has made with their forefathers. The seed aspect of the covenant has to a large extent been fulfilled. There still remains

the land and the blessings element of that covenant. Yahweh was now going to fulfill the land promise. Here we are given a fresh revelation of God's character and nature (Kaiser 1990:340). While there is no theophany, there is nevertheless inference to Yahweh's personal authority.

And God spoke to Moses does not indicate another time when God spoke to Moses. It simply means that Yahweh continued speaking to Moses. What God said to him was of utmost importance. He opens by the presentation of what Durham (1987:75) calls the auto-kerygmatic formula, *I am Yahweh* (אֲנִי יְהוָה *ănî yahweh*). The speech begins and ends with this phrase. The use of the Name on both ends guarantees all the contents of the speech (Cole 1973:83). The importance of this statement is its close connection with the covenant. Yahweh's deeds are held up as proof that he is and does what is claimed in his special name. The implications of this name are far-reaching.

Ellison (1982:35) begins to answer the questions that emanate from this and the ensuing statement. He says: "I am Yahweh" is not the revelation of a name, but a call to realize its implications, "I shall be that (what) I shall be". This auto-kerygmatic formula authenticates the message and the promise that is given to Moses. The divine name conveyed the idea of God's effective presence (Knight 1976:44). God is not here revealing the sound of the name, but he is really disclosing himself. He does not merely inform Moses of his name, but by announcing the name he also makes known his essential character (Childs 1974:114). He reveals himself to Moses as Yahweh who remembers his covenant, and who will bring it to pass. The phrase *I am Yahweh* appears several times as a refrain in our text (6:2, 6, 7 and 8). Yahweh reveals that he is the only God who exists and exerts his power (Hyatt 1971:93) and Pharaoh will surely know it.

Henry (1999:206) argues that, assuming documentary redaction of the Pentateuch as projected by the critics, the very prominence of the name of YAHWEH in the pre-Mosaic narratives renders it highly improbable that any redactor could himself have understood Exodus 6:3 as a categorical denial that YAHWEH's name was known

before Moses' time. In the use of the names with almost equal frequency in Genesis (where YAHWEH occurs 146 times, ELOHIM 164 times) Allis finds evidence that the name YAHWEH was known in patriarchal times and while still lacking its later importance, had perhaps already gained prophetic significance (cf. Gen. 49:18; *The Five Books of Moses*, p. 28).

I presented myself to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as 'God Almighty'.... The covenant connection is immediately clear by the mention of the patriarchs. We are reminded of Gen. 17:1ff. Yahweh revealed himself to the patriarchs. He *presented* himself in a particular way to them. It is a characteristic P reference to God and is restricted to the patriarchal narratives. *God Almighty* is an often disputed translation of אֱלֹהֵי שַׁדַּי (*ēl šadday*). Cole (1973:84) notes: It appears to be an old Mesopotamian divine title, connected to the root "mountain". He was thus also known as the 'Mountain God'. Later Hebrew orthodoxy translated it as 'the all-sufficient One'. It nevertheless has reference to the true God.

The strange thing is that it is now said that God was not known by the patriarchs as Yahweh; ... *and by my name, Yahweh, I did not become known to them.* It seems odd in the light of Gen. 15:7 and Gen.28:13. So, it is not the revelation of a name not previously known. Cassuto (1967:77) argues that if God was introducing a new name, he would have said, 'My name is Yahweh', not 'I am Yahweh'. The phrase 'I am Yahweh' appears very frequently in the Bible, and cannot every time be an introduction. It simply served as a re-iteration that that is his name. It is not a revelation every time, but a statement of him as fulfiller of his promises. We agree with Knight who says that the words 'I am Yahweh' are now the signature of the God of *revelation* (1976:45).

We cannot move on until we have mentioned Garr's (1992:385-408) discussion on this issue. The verse records a contrast between the deity's two names and the periods they represent. El Shaddai is contrasted with Yahweh. In the first instance the title is governed by the *beth*. The *beth essentiae* is able to influence the form, function and state of the word. The preposition marks a limited equivalence; the

subject is represented by the name. The 'I' (God) is *El Shaddai*, but *El Shaddai* highlights a partial aspect of God. The partial aspect is the fact that he is the promise-maker.

Yahweh, on the other hand, represented the whole. Both God and God's name is the object of knowledge. God's name is identified with himself. The noun and its subject are equi-referential. The entire verse, then, contrasts two divine names and what they represent: *El Shaddai* as a part of God, and *Yahweh* as the whole. *Yahweh* was therefore the manifestation of God in the period of Moses as the promise-keeper. Therefore God as *Yahweh* was not fully known to the patriarchs. Enns (2000:174) concurs: The traditional answer to the documentary approach is in my view correct: Exodus 6:3 does not say that God is now giving a *new* name, but that God's name is now going to be *fully* known; that is, the *significance* of the name is going to be understood at this most pivotal time in Israel's history. *Yahweh* is therefore the One who makes himself known in covenant keeping. *Yahweh* confirms an already established relationship by his mighty acts.

Now, we are told the context within which God made himself known to the patriarchs. It was in the covenant-making context that God was made known to them. Not only is there a link between *El Shaddai* and *Yahweh*, but there is a link between the patriarchal and Israelite relation with God. The covenant-making and the covenant-keeping God is one and the same. The covenant beneficiaries that span the big divide in time are the same too. The covenant is now brought to center-stage.

And also (וַיְהִי) *wegham*) appears twice, and starts the verses 4 and 5. This introduction therefore must be seen as related with what was previously said. The three statements that are connected by this introduction are "I have presented myself", "I have established my covenant" and "I have heard the groan of the sons of Israel". The relationship is one of continuity and of progression. In every case *Yahweh* is the subject and where וַיְהִי appears the action is in the perfect tense. God not only revealed himself, but has also *established* his covenant with them.

The covenant is the result of God's providential and generous sovereignty (cf. Gen. 17:7-8) (Breuggemann 1994:734). According to Cassuto (1967:79), the expression *established* connotes the fulfillment. Mackay shares that sentiment: The idea of 'establishing the covenant' points not to the inaugurating of a new covenant relationship, but to confirming one that was already in existence (2001:120). The actions of Yahweh have reference to his covenant.

The establishment of the covenant God made with Abraham and his seed included the promise of land. The only land that Abraham's seed had title deed to was the cave of Machpelah, Sarah's burial site (Gen.23:17-19). Yahweh mentions the promise of land specifically: *I have established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their sojourning, where they have dwelt in.* The proximity of this land that was promised has some historical connection to them; the patriarchs *sojourned* and *dwelt* there. Because of the ownership of the property bought from Ephron, the Hittite, the proximity of patriarchal sojourn and dwelling is confirmed by the statement, *land of Canaan*. God has made the decision to give them this land. They can only take possession of it after they are delivered from the Egyptians. The Abrahamic covenant is now made the basis of the exodus from Egypt and the entrance into the land of promise (Hyatt 1971:94).

iii) Ex. 6:5a. Yahweh Acknowledges Israel's State.

There is continuity with what has gone before. *I have heard the groan of the sons of Israel*. While Pharaoh refused to hear the groans of the Israelites, Yahweh their God did. This is not the first time that Yahweh says he *heard* their groans. He stated it earlier when he met Moses for the first time (Ex.3:7). Because he has a covenant, he responded when he heard their cry. This verb has the meaning of intense listening with the effect of obeying. In fact, 81 times it is translated as *obey* in the Old Testament.

The *sons of Israel* were the ones groaning, and the reason for their groaning was caused by *the Egyptians who were enslaving them*. The word used for *groaning*,

נִסְּאָה (neʿaqāh) connotes intense struggle of physical pain and suffering. The word is used only four times in the Old Testament, twice in Exodus (2:24; 6:5). God is fully attentive to their present pain and is driven to remember his existing covenant. The immediate pain conjures the historical relationship for future redemption.

iv) Ex. 6:5b. Yahweh Remembers His Covenant.

Yes, the Abrahamic covenant is now made the basis of the exodus from Egypt and the entrance into the land of promise. The fact is that there is a relationship that exists, and it exists because of the covenant that God made with Abraham. It is that relationship that drives Yahweh to do what he promises to do. The tradition wants to affirm the full continuity of Yahweh in the exodus narrative with the God who met with Abraham. It is God's memory of his promises to Abraham that operates in Exodus for liberation.

In the first place this is called *my covenant*. The unconditional nature of the covenant is bound up in this claim of Yahweh; what he promises he will do in spite of the unfaithfulness and faithlessness of his people. It is a gracious act of Yahweh. Secondly, God says that he *remembered* his covenant. This is the second time he is saying so in Exodus; first in 2:24 and now here. There it was spoken in the third person; now it is spoken in the first person. While that is so, it must not be thought that Yahweh forgot about his relationship or about the covenant he has with Abraham's descendants. God's covenant exists before him constantly. Calvin (n.d. 128) says that the meaning of God's remembering is demonstrated by what he does. Cassuto (1967:80) says it is a way of saying that God has resolved to put his promise into effect now. Now the time had come for God to actively intervene in the circumstances of his people (Linnington 2002:697). This is an idiomatic way of saying "I will respond". It is an anthropomorphism used to describe God (Cole 1973:85). Every saving act of God will be seen as remembering the relationship.

v) Ex. 6:6-8. The Promise of Deliverance Restated.

Moses is instructed to go to the Israelites with a message. This is not the first time this message is given to Moses, but this time it is given to him and his people as an encouragement. God is putting his name on the line. His character and reputation is at stake. The covenant, upon which this promise of deliverance is made, is at stake. Everything is at stake!

The word '*Therefore*' is an apt introduction to what follows. It can function in two ways; to reflect motive and to reflect consequence. For motive we see the motivation in what Yahweh had just said. Because Yahweh has revealed himself in the past, he will act with great power for their deliverance. Because Yahweh has made a covenant with them in the past, he will act decisively for their salvation. Because Yahweh has heard their groaning he will bring great judgment upon their oppressors. His remembrance of the covenant is the force of his deeds on their behalf. Yahweh is out to prove himself. For consequence we need to consider what Yahweh is going to say. Moses now has the motivation to transmit Yahweh's message. What Moses must say, he must *say to the sons of Israel*.

Yahweh's speech has opened with the auto-kerygmatic formula, *I am Yahweh* in verse 2, and it will end with it in verse 8. This formula is used once in each of the three verses (6, 7 and 8) of our present consideration. There must be significance in the repetition of the phrase *I am Yahweh*. It authenticates and guarantees what Moses is to tell the people. It is for Moses a guarantee that Yahweh is with him. To both Moses and the people it guarantees the effective action of Yahweh. It evokes confidence in the covenanting nature of Yahweh who has what it takes to bring to pass what he says.

What Yahweh says to the people hits precisely on the area of their greatest needs. They need to be delivered from the Egyptians and they need to be given their own land where they can live in freedom. In effect Yahweh is saying to them that he has already done these things. We have translated what is in the perfect tense as future tense for the sake of flow in the narrative and because it is what Yahweh is

promising. *I will bring you out ... I will rescue you ... I will redeem you ... I will take you ... I will be to you ... I will carry you ... I will give to you.* These seven clauses are being linked together by *Wāw consecutive*. The promise is dominated by first-person verbs, with Yahweh as the subject (Breuggemann 1996:734). The verbs of hope and liberation arise from the self-disclosure reflected in the phrase *I am Yahweh*. He is the one taking the initiative. Three of these verbs are promises about the deliverance, two of them are promises about the land, and two are promises of a personal relationship between them and Yahweh. Lange (1971:18) reminds us that Yahweh pledges himself to a threefold promise of their deliverance from bondage, adoption as the people of God and settlement in the land. Their deliverance and settlement will mean nothing without their relationship through adoption.

Firstly, Yahweh's deliverance of his people will be complete, providing freedom, safety and vindication. Did Moses accuse Yahweh of having done nothing? Now Yahweh reveals himself through his name as the God who fulfils his promise and redeems Israel from Egypt (Childs 1974:115). He said:

1. *I will bring you out* (יָצֵא yāšā) has the force of freeing. Yahweh will free them from forced labor. They will be freed from *the Egyptians* who are placing heavy *burdens* on them in the form of forced labor.

2. *I will rescue you* (נִצַּל nāšāl) connotes the provision of safety. Not only were they subjected to burdens laid upon them, but they were in actual and mortal danger. Their *bondage* (עֲבֹדָה ābōdā) was a state of being owned and controlled by another under dangerous circumstances.

3. *I will redeem you* (גָּאֵל gā'āl) has in mind a kinsman who acts for the honor and well-being of a wounded or abused member of the family. Yahweh shows a solidarity with the slaves he is about to deliver. The *outstretched arm* which, before acted in the mode of oath-making, will now act in a mode of power enforcing *great judgements* (שֹׁפֵט šēpēt). The judgements are punishment according to Yahweh's strict justice for Egypt's unjust treatment of the Israelites even though they cried for justice. Yahweh will create conditions of justice. God would not merely rescue his

people from the Egyptians but would also overtly punish the Egyptians in the process (Stuart 2006:171).

Secondly, Yahweh's adoption of Israel as his own people is emphasized by the use of another strong first-person verb *I will take you* (לָקַחְתִּי *lāqāch*). Israel will now publicly and irreversibly be marked as the people of God. They are no longer the "possession" of Pharaoh, but are the possession of Yahweh, not for his benefit but for their own. This is as much an act of grace as are Yahweh's acts of deliverance.

The act of grace is expressed in Yahweh's self-giving. He sets himself available to be their God. *I will be - to you-* (וְהָיִיתִי *wəhāyīthī*) a God who is open to an intimate relationship. He is their God who will act on their behalf. He restates his deliverance undertaking when he refers to himself as being the one bringing them *out from under the burdens of the Egyptians*. Restatement usually functions to emphasize, and by this emphasis Yahweh shows Moses' earlier accusation as unfounded.

Finally, Yahweh's gift of land comes by his sworn undertaking. The promise of land already guaranteed is now reiterated. Breuggemann (1994:735) shows that there is counterpart to the deliverance of v.6 so that an intentional structure is obvious. In verse 6 there is a 'bringing out', while here in verse 8 there is a 'bringing in'. The two are hinged together by the covenant formula. It is just as obvious that between *I am Yahweh* of verse 6 and *I am Yahweh* of verse 8 is the recognition formula *and you will know that I am Yahweh* of verse 7. *Know* (יָדַעְתֶּם *yādā*) expresses intimacy. They will be better off than Pharaoh who did not recognize Yahweh. They will more than recognize him. Yahweh's acts predicate the knowing. This closing emphasizes the commitment to all that Yahweh has promised, and his ability as king of all the earth to ensure that it will be realized (Mackay 2001:122). Nevertheless, the knowledge of their God must be experienced in the land that he is giving them. The relationship and gift are possible only because of and are bounded by the claim *I am Yahweh*.

c) Ex. 6:9. Israel's Response to Moses.

Moses must have left Yahweh's presence to go and deliver the message to the Israelites. The narrative does not say so, but we are simply told that *Moses spoke this to the sons of Israel*. It is therefore obvious that Moses did what Yahweh told him in verse 6 to do, namely, "*Therefore say to the sons of Israel ...*". Moses had a powerful and authoritative redefinition of reality to share with the Israelites.

Instead of responding excitingly, as we would have expected them to do, we are told that *they did not listen* (שָׁמַעַ *šā-mă*) to Moses. They lacked perception and did not receive or pay attention to the good news of deliverance, adoption and settlement. Their understanding failed them because of their state of mind and of body. After their disappointment at the failure of the initial attempt to liberate them, followed by the intensification of the bondage, they were disheartened and despondent, and they found no consolation in what Moses told them in the name of Yahweh (Cassuto 1967:82).

They did not respond in the way they did because they were stubborn or hard-hearted like Pharaoh, but *because of a spirit of discouragement*. It is more literally because of *a lack of spirit* that they failed to understand. Their spirit was broken. This was their state of mind. We do not agree with Cole who thinks that the response was one of impatience or anger (1973:86). In addition to a lack of spirit, we are also told that they did not respond *because of their cruel* (קָשָׁה *qāšēh*) *bondage*. This was their state of body.

Their response was not one of recalcitrance, but of exhaustion and despair. For this short moment the depth of despair defeated the hope of God (Breuggemann 1994:735). While Keil and Delitzsch comments that Moses also became despondent (1968:468), we believe that his report to Yahweh shows on his part an understanding of their difficulties.

d) Ex. 6:10-12. Yahweh Interrogated by a Skeptical Moses.

Neither does Yahweh weigh heavily upon them by insisting that they should heed what he is saying or, that they should notice his self-disclosure which is intended for their benefit. Instead Yahweh now gives Moses another mandate. We believe that Moses is again in the presence of God where he receives this second mandate. We are simply told that *Yahweh spoke to Moses*.

i) Ex. 6:10-11. Yahweh's Instruction to Moses.

It is within God's plan that Moses should 'go in', right into the unholy of unholies, to meet the evil at its source (Knight 1976:48). Yahweh now commands Moses to address Pharaoh himself. *Go and tell Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, to let the sons of Israel go from his land. Go and tell* are both in the imperative mood, yet Yahweh's mandate is again met with resistance. This time the resistance comes from Moses.

The nature of the message Moses must give to Pharaoh differs a great deal from the one he had to give the Israelites. The Israelites were given a message of hope. This one to Pharaoh treats him like a subordinate to Yahweh. Besides, this message to Pharaoh is a short instruction; *let the sons of Israel go*. Pharaoh was instructed to send the Israelites *from his land*. We can only imagine the struggle Pharaoh would have with this kind of instruction. It would disrupt his economic and public works programmes. Moses must have known what the implications to the Egyptians would be. In fact the message never gets delivered to Pharaoh because the messenger refuses to do so. He puts forward a good case for his refusal to go to Pharaoh.

ii) Ex. 6:12. Moses' Skepticism.

Moses' refusal to go to Pharaoh comes with some measure of boldness. *Moses spoke in the presence of Yahweh*. The word for *presence* (לִפְנֵי *liphnay*) literally means "to the face". The relationship between Yahweh and Moses was one where

Moses could frequent Yahweh's presence. In the presence of Yahweh he could express himself openly and honestly. Boldness never means contempt, for Moses has great respect for his God.

Pharaoh, Moses believes, will not heed his message. In comparison to the Israelites and the message meant for them, this new mandate seems unreasonable. If the Israelites rejected good news, then Pharaoh will certainly reject bad news. Stuart puts it well:

If the Israelites, who would be his natural allies and who stood to gain from the message he was speaking on God's behalf, would not listen, how could he ever expect to meet success by carrying on with the task of demanding freedom from Pharaoh, who was his natural enemy in this situation and who stood to lose hugely from an Israelite exodus? (2006:173).

Moses puts it across as a question, *why will Pharaoh listen to me?* We have to admit that his argument is potent. The thought of confronting Pharaoh and the repercussions it might have, stirs in Moses unwillingness.

Moses again brings up an old objection. In his humility, he bases his objection on his lack of eloquence by saying, *I am unskilled in speech*. It literally says 'uncircumcised (עָרֵל *āreʿl*) lips'. Moses is focusing on his own inadequacy, rather than appreciating that the outcome depends on what the Lord will bring to the situation, not what Moses can do (Mackay 2001:124). The question is, how can Yahweh use for his service what is uncircumcised? To this point it just did not seem to work. Moses' excuse will not let him off the hook. He is God's man for the job and will become the greatest leader Israel has known.

2.4 Theological Reflection.

This pericope is closely joined to the call of Moses. Moses is confused because it seemed that his obedience to Yahweh caused an outcome opposite to that which he expected. Their redemption seemed to be further than before he approached the king of Egypt. Pharaoh acted more harshly toward the Israelites. Pharaoh's

hand was heavier upon them, and the hand of Yahweh seemed impotent. The elders of Israel looked toward Pharaoh for relief, but unlike God, he neither hears nor answers. Pharaoh's response turns them against the man of Yahweh, and consequently against Yahweh himself. Moses was himself influenced to come with an accusation against God.

When Moses and Aaron entered the presence of Pharaoh, they used the prophetic oracle, which is rare in the Pentateuch: "Thus says the Lord" (This is what the Lord, the God of Israel says). But Pharaoh denied any knowledge of Yahweh. He did not know Yahweh; he did not fear Yahweh; and he would not let the people worship Yahweh. Pharaoh would get to know Yahweh, and he would acknowledge the mighty acts of the Lord.

The foremen of the Israelites did not understand that their deprivation was an aspect of the battle waged between Yahweh and Pharaoh. There must be a complete end to Pharaoh as a resource for them, even if they had to find their own straw for their brick-making. When Pharaoh used the fact that the Israelites outnumbered the Egyptians as the excuse for continued abuse, he expressed his denial of the fact that they were the blessed of Yahweh. Pharaoh made Yahweh's man to appear incredibly inept (Childs 1974:106). He got the Israelite leaders to discredit Moses. Moses was renounced by his own people, who now preferred the status quo rather than the prospect of freedom. For them it appeared as though Yahweh was defeated by an obstinate Pharaoh.

Moses appeared before God and accused him of maliciousness and of bringing evil upon his people. Durham (1987:67) translates that *Moses turned on Yahweh*. Moses appeared before the Judge, not to be judged, but with the audacity to judge. We see that he interrogates God. He was calling the character of God into question. Moses not only questioned the point of his mission, but accused God of failure to deliver and of bringing more calamity and trouble. Moses interrogated precisely only because he believed that Yahweh was indeed in control. So, why did Yahweh allow and permit such trouble to happen? The narrative puts Moses' question in this way in order to show that God allows dialogue of this nature.

The future of the Israelites as Yahweh's people was at stake. God gave a word for the future. Yahweh provided Moses with motivation to continue as his agent on behalf of the Israelites. Yahweh would demonstrate what real power was like. Yahweh confirmed his promise of deliverance and of leaving Pharaoh absolutely powerless and with no option but to release the Israelites. Pharaoh was going to feel Yahweh's judgment. Pharaoh will be caused to send them away; Pharaoh's sending is actually Yahweh's deliverance. Pharaoh will be unable to resist Yahweh. It is Yahweh who mobilizes Pharaoh to bring about Yahweh's deliverance. Pharaoh will be forced (Stuart 2006:169).

Moses and the people only needed to trust in the Lord. Yahweh is a God of war on Israel's behalf. Moses needed to know that he too was to act in the Name and authority of Yahweh. Their redemption would be spectacular. Moses was expected to encourage the people to hope in the Lord, who was their salvation; and in the prospect of them being showcased as the people of Yahweh.

We have the fullest self-disclosure of God offered in Exodus. Four times God uses the auto-confessional, "I am Yahweh" (6:2, 6, 7 and 8). This was an act of self-revelation, making known his essential character and his covenant faithfulness. God was committed to save the victims of Egyptian oppression. His self-revelation encompassed the whole redemptive power of God. God was going to save them with heavy-handed judgment upon the Egyptians, because he was committed to his covenant with the Israelites and to fulfill his promises to them. The auto-confessional conveyed the idea that God's effective presence was with them and for them.

The history of God's revelation is given. To Abraham he revealed himself as *EI Shaddai* (Gen. 17:1ff.). The revelation to Moses is contrasted to the revelation given to the fathers. To the fathers God was the all-sufficient One. Yahweh was the Name of fulfillment. The name of God was now fully known. This was so because God *presented* himself. Moses was privy to the plans of God. Yahweh was going to use Pharaoh's obstinacy to bring about salvation. When the Israelites are

delivered, then Pharaoh will know who Yahweh is. When God establishes his covenant then the Israelites will know Yahweh, their God. The covenant people are a redeemed people. Their redemption comes from their covenant God. He will *carry* them and *bring* them to the land he has promised.

God revealed the purpose of his promise: he was going to redeem the Israelites because he heard their groans. He was going to make them his people because this was what he had promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He was going give them a land. The Name was the guarantee. The reality of God stands behind the promise. God's covenant exists before him constantly. God had resolved to put his promise into effect. His remembrance was his resolve to respond. God is putting his Name on the line. His character and reputation was at stake. The seven *I will* clauses have verbs of hope and liberation that arise out of the divine name. Yahweh is the one who takes the initiative.

Unfortunately, the people lacked perception and they would not listen to the good news of deliverance, adoption and settlement. They failed to understand this great news because their spirit was broken. The depth of their despair and despondence defeated their hope. The salvation that God was to provide had the force of freeing. It was to provide safety. It was to act for the honor and well-being of the wounded. God was in solidarity with the oppressed. He was to publicly make the slaves his own people. Yahweh was willing to be in open and intimate relationship with them.

The people's unbelief was contagious. Moses himself did not believe, and he used the unbelief of the people as the reason why Pharaoh would reject his message from Yahweh. Again, Moses was allowed to express his heart openly and honestly to Yahweh. Moses was not convinced that Yahweh was with him and with his mouth because he brings up the old objection; that he was a man of unskilled speech (uncircumcised lips).

Childs (1974:119) recognizes that this text is tremendously theocentric as is the case in the Book of Exodus. The focus of God is that of revealing himself. In this act of majestic self-revelation and self-identification, I am Yahweh, God is making

himself known. To know his Name is to know his purpose for all mankind from beginning to end. Pharaoh is reduced to a pawn; not a partner in the plan of God. He will be judged for his consistent obstinacy. All God's interventions in human history arose from the concern of his name.

As far as the New Testament's reference to our current text is concerned, there is not much to be found. The way it is used also demonstrates the New Testament's interpretation of it. Acts 13:17 finds some correlation with Exodus 6:1 and 6:6. Paul also alludes to our current text in his argument in Romans 9:14-18. How did Paul employ this text in the two occasions mentioned?

In his speech in Pisidian Antioch, Paul addresses both Jews and Gentiles as he was requested by the synagogue rulers to do. They were addressed as those who worshiped God. In Acts 13:17 Paul stated that God favored the fathers whom he chose. God's favor caused the people to prosper in Egypt. Though they were oppressed and ill-treated by the Egyptians, they still grew in number; so much so that Pharaoh uses this as an excuse to perpetuate his abuse of the Israelites.

God favored his chosen people to the point that he became their warrior, leading them out of that country with a mighty hand. The Egyptians army was on the other side of God's favor and they were destroyed because of their obstinacy; but God, not only overlooked Israel's obstinacy (v.18) because of his favor and election, but he overthrew seven nations to give the Promised Land as their inheritance. So, while in our text the Israelites could not recognize it, in fact God favored them.

The favor of God extended beyond the event of the exodus. Paul went on to show that God's favor was embodied in David, the king of Israel. He was a man after God's own heart (v.22). The promise to David was fulfilled in Jesus Christ who rose from the dead because he was the approved and beloved son of God (vv.30-32). God raised Jesus Christ from the dead for us; that is for our benefit (v.33). All this served God's purpose to show his favor also upon those who believe and are justified by God (vv.36-39).

In the Romans text, Paul speaks about the absolute freedom in carrying out his plans for Israel and the world. God's acts are his sovereign activities (vv.14-16). Pharaoh's role in the exodus is given. The almighty and sovereign act of God reduced Pharaoh to being a mere pawn serving God's purpose (v.17). Pharaoh was raised for the purpose of demonstrating God's mighty power, and so that Yahweh's fame may be declared in the whole world. God was not only interested in Pharaoh's personal acknowledgement, but in the acknowledgement of the whole world. God's purpose in election stands upon his sovereignty. He will harden whomever necessary in order to bring salvation to his people and to bring glory to himself.

2 C. THE PRESENT GOD DELIVERS HIS PEOPLE.

Up until now, Yahweh has taken the initiative and has been the only mover to perpetuate the relationship that was established many years earlier with the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The Passover was the culmination of a mighty deliverance through the plagues that God brought on the Egyptians. Curiously, only the Egyptians were subjected to the plagues, while the Israelites were spared, shielded and immune to all ten the plagues brought upon their oppressors. The mighty hand of Yahweh proved to be more powerful than the hand of Pharaoh. The Egyptians finally expelled them from their land, but they were not entirely rid of their oppressors.

While Pharaoh gave in he never gave up. His heart was still to be hardened some more and Yahweh was still going to do all that was necessary to free his people completely. What he was about to do was no ordinary feat. He would rescue his people with a mighty hand, demonstrating many wonders and signs, not so much against Pharaoh, as with the plagues, but for his people to show them that he is their deliverer. By these miracles both the Egyptians and the Israelites would know that Yahweh alone is God in all the earth.

This passage profoundly shows that the beginning of any relationship to be had with Yahweh, demanded faith in Yahweh on the part of those he was about to rescue. These slave-people, who had no military skills, would soon witness how Yahweh was about to fight on their behalf. Their victory was really Yahweh's victory. The might of their oppressor's military machine would finally be destroyed, and they would be free indeed. Pharaoh's chariots, horses and horsemen were no match for Yahweh whose only weapon was a staff in the hand of his servant. This was to be an event they would never forget. All that they needed to do was to trust in their God and in his servant, Moses.

The ironies of this story are numerous. The Egyptians, who perceived the Israelites to be confused and pursued them, became the confused when their wheels literally

came off during their pursuit of the Israelites. Yahweh was the cause of the apparent confusion of the Israelites, who chose rather to lead them through the desert than through the Philistine country. Yahweh also caused the confusion among the pursuing Egyptians who, in their confusion came to the realization that Yahweh was fighting for his people.

When the Israelites complained that Moses brought them there to be buried in the desert as though there were not enough graves for them in Egypt, Yahweh actually brought Pharaoh and his army there to be buried. The burial of Pharaoh and his men was Yahweh's final deliverance of his people from their oppressors. The people were freed as their overlords were incarcerated by their graves in the desert. Yahweh's victory over the Egyptians was comprehensive and decisive.

In all of Scripture this is probably the most quoted and referred-to event in the history of the Jewish nation. It is often referred to in both the Old and New Testaments. It is preached on in both Synagogues and Churches, and is important to both Jew and Christian in terms of its theological meaning and implications. The Jews were instructed to observe its remembrance, and to recognize that their very identity and relationship with Yahweh was characterized by this story of redemption.

Perhaps, the most important fact was that Yahweh was alive and was with his people. That, in itself, was an indication that Yahweh was also for his people. He was mighty on their behalf. He was able to work day and night to procure their salvation. The deliverance by the sea was where Yahweh not only gained the victory over Pharaoh, but he also gained the glory as he said he would.

Exodus 13:17 – 14:31.

1. Translation:

- 13:17** When Pharaoh let the people go, God led them, not by way of the Philistine country, which was nearer, because God said, “The people might repent when they face battle⁷⁴ and want to return to Egypt.”
- 18 And God led the people by the way of the desert, by the Red⁷⁵ Sea. And being organized by fifties⁷⁶, the sons of Israel went out from the land of Egypt.
- 19 And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him because he (*Joseph*)⁷⁷ made the sons of Israel to solemnly⁷⁸ promise, saying: “If you do this, God will surely take notice of you and cause you to carry my bones from here with you.”
- 20 They set out⁷⁹ from Succoth and encamped at Etham, on the edge of the desert.
- 21 And Yahweh went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them in the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could proceed by day and by night.
- 22 The pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night, did not depart from the front⁸⁰ of the people.
- 14: 1** And Yahweh spoke to Moses saying:
- 2 “Tell the sons of Israel, ‘Return and encamp before Pi Hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea; you shall camp in front of the sea and opposite⁸¹ Baal Zephon’”.
- 3 And Pharaoh will say: ‘The sons of Israel are being entangled in the land. They are shut in by the desert.’
- 4 And I will harden the heart of Pharaoh, and he will pursue them. But I will be glorified by Pharaoh and his whole army⁸², and the Egyptians will know that I am Yahweh, and that I have done this to them.”

⁷⁴ In the AV this word is translated “war” (158 times) and “battle” (151 times) (Strong’s:4421; HGK:4878)

⁷⁵ Literally, “sea of reeds” or “sea of weeds”. The word enters prominently into the problem of the route of the Exodus in the territory of the “sea of reeds”. There is no warrant for the idea that because Israel crossed the Sea of Reeds that the water was shallow and no miracle was involved. Any deep sea may have reeds on its edge and both the Bitter Lakes and Lake Timsah are large and deep bodies of water. (Strong’s:5488; TWOT:1479).

⁷⁶ It could also be translated “armed for battle” (NIV)

⁷⁷ Added

⁷⁸ Because the verb is re-stated, the force of the verb is amplified, and hence the adverb.

⁷⁹ It means literally, to ‘pull out the tent pegs’. This word is mainly found in the Pentateuch (especially in Numbers). It fits well with the historical setting of the Hebrews before the Promised land. (HGK:5825)

⁸⁰ Literally, *in the face of...*, or, *in the sight of...*

⁸¹ נִכְחָוּ is more often translated “against” (HGK:5790; Strong’s:5226)

- 5 Then the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled. As did his servants, Pharaoh changed his heart towards the people. And they said: “What is this we have done; to cast⁸³ the Israelites out from serving us?”
- 6 And he harnessed his chariot and took his people along with him.
- 7 And he took six-hundred chariots of his choosing⁸⁴, and all the chariots of Egypt and the captains⁸⁵ over them.
- 8 And Yahweh hardened the heart of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, and he pursued after the sons of Israel. The sons of Israel were leaving with hand being high⁸⁶.
- 9 And the Egyptians pursued them and overtook them as they were camping at the sea-side. All the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen and his army, caught up with them at Pi Hahiroth, before Baal Zephon.
- 10 As Pharaoh drew near and the sons of Israel lifted up their eyes and beheld the Egyptians marching behind them, they became very afraid, and the sons of Israel cried out to Yahweh.
- 11 And they said to Moses, “Why? Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you brought us to die in the desert? Why have you done this to us, and have brought us out from Egypt?”
- 12 “Is this not what we told you in Egypt when we said, ‘Leave us to serve the Egyptians, because it is better for us to serve⁸⁷ the Egyptians than for us to die in the desert?’”
- 13 And Moses spoke to the people, “Do not be afraid, stand and see the salvation⁸⁸ which Yahweh will perform for you today, because the Egyptians which you see today, you will never again see them.”
- 14 “You keep still, and Yahweh will engage in battle for you.”
- 15 And Yahweh said to Moses, “Why are you crying⁸⁹ out to me? Tell the sons of Israel to go forward.”
- 16 “And you; lift up your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea to divide it, and bring the sons of Israel through the sea on dry ground.”
- 17 “And see I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and bring them after you. And I will be honored by Pharaoh, and by all his army, his chariots⁹⁰ and his horsemen⁹¹.”
- 18 “And the Egyptians will know that I am Yahweh, and I will be honored by Pharaoh, by his chariots and by his horsemen.”

⁸² Also, “men of valor” and “physical strength” (Strong’s:381; HGK:2657)

⁸³ Also, “to let go” (Strong’s:7971)

⁸⁴ We selected this word to accommodate the participle form of the verb, **בָּחַר**. The root idea is that of a special selection by examining; a carefully thought out choice. (Strong’s:977; TWOT:231)

⁸⁵ **יְשָׁרִים** also means “thirty sayings” and “excellent things” (TWOT:2403)

⁸⁶ The idea is that of *boldness*.

⁸⁷ The Semitic root is to obey, and to worship. (BDB:712.2; Genesis:p598)

⁸⁸ There are 76 occurrences of this word. In the AV it is translated “salvation” (65 times), and “deliverance” (3 times), but it means “to rescue” (Strong’s:3444; HGK:3802)

⁸⁹ It is a crying out in desperation. (TWOT:1947a)

⁹⁰ This is actually in the singular form.

⁹¹ This is literally “horses”, meaning those who manage the horses from the chariots (Mowinckel, TWOT:1836.)

- 19 And the angel of God moved from going in front of the camp of Israel, and went to their rear. And the pillar of cloud moved from the front of them and stood behind them.
- 20 It stood between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel. The pillar of cloud was dark on the one side, and it gave light at night on the other side, so that they could not draw near to one another all night.
- 21 So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and Yahweh swept the sea with a strong east wind all night, as he rent⁹² open the waters⁹³ to make dry ground.
- 22 Then the sons of Israel went through the midst of the sea on dry ground. And the waters were a wall on the right and on the left of them.
- 23 And the Egyptians pursued and went after them with every horse of Pharaoh, his chariots and his horsemen through the midst of the sea.
- 24 And it was the night watch before the morning⁹⁴. And Yahweh looked down from the pillar of fire and cloud upon the camp of the Egyptians, and threw the camp of the Egyptians into confusion⁹⁵.
- 25 And he caused the wheels of their chariots to come off, and led them into difficulty⁹⁶. The Egyptians said, "Let us flee from the face of Israel because Yahweh is fighting for them against the Egyptians."
- 26 And Yahweh said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, and the waters will return over the Egyptians, over their chariots⁹⁷ and over their horsemen."
- 27 So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at day-break the sea returned to its perpetual movement, as it was before⁹⁸. And the Egyptians were fleeing into the closing waters⁹⁹. And Yahweh swept the Egyptians away in the midst of the sea.
- 28 The waters returned and covered every chariot and horseman, to the whole army of Pharaoh, who were going after them in the sea. Not even one of them was left.
- 29 But the sons of Israel walked on dry ground in the midst of the sea, and the waters were to them a wall on the right and on the left of them.
- 30 And Yahweh rescued the Israelites that day. And Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead upon the shore¹⁰⁰ of the sea.
- 31 And Israel saw the great hand which Yahweh used against Egypt, and the people feared Yahweh, and they believed in Yahweh and his servant, Moses.

⁹² The basic idea is a strenuous cleaving, hence a cutting into two. (Strong's:1234; HGK:1324)

⁹³ Found only in the plural form (580 occurrences). (TWOT:1188)

⁹⁴ That is the third watch. HGK:874; NASB:H821)

⁹⁵ The verb is used 13 times, and in ten of them, God is the subject (5 times Israel are the object). (Strong's:2000; TWOT:504).

⁹⁶ The basic meaning is "to be heavy", and is rarely used literally. (BDB:459.2; TWOT:943g)

⁹⁷ Occurs here in the singular form.

⁹⁸ Literally, "in the morning"

⁹⁹ Literally, "to meet him"

¹⁰⁰ Literally, "the lip of the sea" (HGK:8557; BDB:973.2)

2. Exegesis.

This section delineates the Exodus of the Hebrews from their leaving Rameses to their passage through the Red Sea. The story moves from slavery through salvation to worship. The chapters in Exodus which are focused on an enslaved people approximate the number of chapters given to matters of worship, with the transition being the story of redemption. Their rescue from bondage will be decisive and comprehensive. Their redemption will be complete and they will be free to worship, not only for three days, but for all time.

Succoth was probably the rendezvous for the whole nation, so that it was from this point that they first proceeded in an orderly march (Keil and Delitzsch 2002:345). Their route would not be through the Philistine country, even though this was the shortest route. The Philistines were very war-like and would have attacked the Israelites, who were unprepared for such resistance, causing them to desire to return to Egypt. They soon desired to return to Egypt for different reasons. This just proved that their deliverance was not yet complete.

The large number (Ex.12:37) of people who left Egypt has long been found to be problematic, and historical criticism in general has rejected them as being “ahistorical” or impossible. The standard conservative viewpoint was for a literal interpretation. This obviously would have made the survival of such a group in the desert an extraordinary feat, notwithstanding the miraculous intervention of the Lord. Besides, it seems to be incongruent with Deut. 7:7, which suggests that Israel was indeed “the smallest [or fewest] of all the nations.”

We find the *semantic interpretation* very plausible. The Hebrew root אֶלֶף (*alep*) can denote 1) a thousand, 2) leader, chief or captain and 3) clan, family, group, troop. Taking option 3 a total number of fighting men may come to 5550, which is approximately 10 men per troop. From other historical data such as the Amarna correspondence around the same period, fighting troops involved ten men. If the semantic interpretation is to be accepted, one would expect to have a total of

20000 to 25000 for the people of Israel. This is a figure that would be consistent with the issues raised concerning the size of the population during the time period under consideration. (Klingbeil 2003: 401-420).

The Hebrews could not depend on their numbers of fighting men or on their preparedness and armour, but on Yahweh. While the Hebrews were exhorted to notice how Yahweh would fight for them, it is the Egyptians who recognize and acknowledge that Yahweh was fighting for them (Ex. 14:25). Yahweh gave the Israelites victory that day.

2.1 **Genré.**

Again, the general literary style is *narrative*. It relates the story of the deliverance of the Hebrews that happened at the Red Sea. It is more particularly a *saga* as it portrays a contest between a protagonist and an antagonist. Pharaoh, the antagonist, tries through his agents of war to prevent the rescue of the Hebrews by Yahweh, the protagonist and his agent, Moses.

The section 13:17-22 is a simple *report* within the narrative. The report is written in prose, reflecting no rhythmic characteristics of any sort. The section 14:1-31, also written in prose, continues the saga of what became a *legend* in Israel's literary history. God's act of salvation had to be remembered and memorized by the Israelites. This deliverance would become the central aspect of their kerygmatic confession about God's goodness to them. The exodus-motif is found in the whole Old Testament. Together with the Passover, the deliverance message is applied to the New Testament work of Christ.

2.2 **Structural Considerations.**

Our present text is circumscribed by the story in the section 13:17 – 18:27. Some scholars go back to include the text from 12:37. It is therefore the beginning of a

story of the people out of Egypt. This is agreed by most scholars. Beyond 18:27 we find the Israelites settled at Mount Sinai, which is considered to be another section. Nevertheless, we recognize the unity of 13:17 – 18:27.

Many scholars bound this pericope as 13:17 – 15:21. While the songs of Moses and Miriam (15:1-21) may be naturally included, it will take the story beyond the section that more strictly represents the crossing of the Red Sea. This present section relates the actual deliverance story and can safely stand without the song. Another way, in which our current text stands on its own, is that what follows is regarded as the wilderness story. Furthermore, 15:1-21 is largely in poetic form and can on that basis be separated from our current prose text.

Our text, 13:17 – 14:31, cannot really be further broken into stand-alone texts. The section belongs together and makes sense only as it is considered as a unit. We shall therefore consider this text synchronically as we accept the unity of the final text. In fact, to cement the idea of unity in this text, we were able to recognize a somewhat balanced text in the parallelism (chiasm) demonstrated below.

2.2.1 Text Outline.

- | | | | |
|----|-------------|---|-----------|
| a. | 13:17 – 22. | Israel's Route and Guidance. | A |
| | i) | God leads the troops (13:17-18) | |
| | ii) | Cutting ties with Egypt (13:19) | |
| | iii) | Yahweh in the pillar (13:20-22) | |
| b. | 14:1 – 4. | Yahweh's Plan Revealed To Moses. | B |
| | i) | Pharaoh is deceived (14:1-3) | |
| | ii) | Pharaoh will acknowledge Yahweh (14:4) | |
| c. | 14:5 – 9. | Pharaoh's Final Response. | C |
| | i) | Pharaoh's regret (14:5) | |
| | ii) | Pharaoh's preparation (14:6–7) | |
| | iii) | Pharaoh's pursuit (14:8-9) | |
| d. | 14:10 – 14. | Israel's Fear and Encouragement. | D |
| | i) | Israel's fear (14:10) | |
| | ii) | Moses' intention questioned (14:11-12) | |
| | iii) | Israel must see Yahweh's salvation (14:13-14) | |
| e. | 14:15 – 18. | Yahweh's Final Resolve. | E |
| | i) | Instructing Israel (14:15) | |
| | ii) | Instructing Moses (14:16) | |
| | iii) | Instructing Pharaoh and his army (14:17-18) | |
| f. | 14:19 – 22. | Israel's Protection and Salvation. | D' |
| | i) | Yahweh positions himself (14:19-20) | |
| | ii) | Israel goes through the sea (14:21-22) | |
| g. | 14:23 – 25. | Pharaoh's Final Pursuit. | C' |
| | i) | The Egyptians pursue the Israelites (14:23-25a) | |
| | ii) | The Egyptians acknowledge Yahweh (14:25b) | |
| h. | 14:26 – 28. | Yahweh's Deliverance Brought By Moses. | B' |
| | i) | Moses stretches out his hand (14:26-27a) | |
| | ii) | The waters return (14:27b-28) | |
| j. | 14:29 – 31. | Israel's Victory and Faith. | A' |
| | i) | Israel's victory (14:29-30) | |
| | ii) | Israel responds with faith (14:31) | |

2.2.2 Linguistic, Grammatical and Rhetorical Characteristics.

2.2.2.1 Important Recurring Verbs (by stem)

<i>Stem</i>	<i>Meaning</i>	<i>Occurrences</i>	<i>Verse</i>	<i>Translated as</i>
רָאָה	see	6	13:17	they <i>see</i>
			14:13	and see
			14:13	you <i>see</i>
			14:13	you <i>see</i>
			14:30	they <i>saw</i>
			14:31	they <i>saw</i>
שׁוּב	return	5	13:17	they return
			14:2	you return
			14:26	will return over
			14:27	the sea returned
			14:28	the waters returned
לָקַח	take	4	13:19	he <i>took</i>
			14:6	he <i>took</i>
			14:7	he <i>took</i>
			14:11	you <i>brought</i>
נָסַע	set out	5	13:20	they <i>set out</i>
			14:10	they were <i>marching</i>
			14:15	you <i>go forward</i>
			14:19	he <i>moved</i>
			14:19	he <i>moved</i>
חָנָה	encamp	4	13:20	they <i>encamped</i>
			14:2	you <i>encamp</i>
			14:2	you shall <i>camp</i>
			14:9	they were <i>camping</i>
הָלַךְ	go	6	13:21	he <i>went</i>
			13:21	they <i>proceed</i>
			14:19	from <i>going</i>
			14:19	<i>went</i> from
			14:21	he <i>swept</i>
			14:29	they <i>walked</i>
דָּבַר	speak	5	14:1	he <i>spoke</i>
			14:2	you <i>tell</i>
			14:12	we <i>told</i>
			14:12	we <i>said</i>
			14:15	you <i>tell</i>

Stem	Meaning	Occurrences	Verse	Translated as
חָזַק	harden	3	14:4 14:8 14:17	I will <i>harden</i> he <i>hardened</i> I will <i>harden</i>
רָדַף	pursue	4	14:4 14:8 14:9 14:23	he will <i>pursue</i> he <i>pursued</i> they <i>pursued</i> they <i>pursued</i>
כָּבַד	honor	3	14:4 14:17 14:18	I will <i>be glorified</i> I will <i>be honored</i> I will <i>be honored</i>
עָשָׂה	do	5	14:4 14:5 14:11 14:13 14:31	I have <i>done</i> we have <i>done</i> you have <i>done</i> he will <i>perform</i> he <i>used</i>
עָבַד	serve	5	14:5 14:5 14:12 14:12 14:31	his <i>servants</i> <i>serving</i> us us <i>to serve</i> us <i>to serve</i> his <i>servant</i>
נָטָה	stretch out	4	14:16 14:21 14:26 14:27	you <i>stretch out</i> he <i>stretched out</i> you <i>stretch out</i> he <i>stretched out</i>
בּוֹא	come / go	6	14:16 14:17 14:20 14:22 14:23 14:28	you <i>bring</i> I will <i>bring</i> they <i>draw near</i> they <i>went</i> they <i>went</i> they were <i>going</i>
פָּנָה	turn to	9	13:21 13:22 14:2 14:2 14:9 14:19 14:19 14:25 14:27	he went <i>before</i> from the <i>front</i> <i>before</i> in <i>front</i> <i>before</i> going in <i>front</i> moved from the <i>front</i> from the <i>face</i> <i>before</i>

2.2.2.2 Important Recurring Nouns (by stem)

Stem	Meaning	Occurrences	Verse	Translated as
מִדְבָּר	desert	5	13:18	<i>desert</i>
			13:20	<i>desert</i>
			14:3	<i>desert</i>
			14:11	<i>desert</i>
			14:12	<i>desert</i>
עֲמֹוד	pillar	6	13:21	<i>pillar</i>
			13:21	<i>pillar</i>
			13:22	<i>pillar</i>
			13:22	<i>pillar</i>
			14:19	<i>pillar</i>
			14:24	<i>pillar</i>
לַיְלָה	night	6	13:21	<i>by night</i>
			13:21	<i>by night</i>
			13:22	<i>by night</i>
			14:20	<i>at night</i>
			14:20	<i>all night</i>
			14:21	<i>all night</i>
חַיִל	physical strength	4	14:4	<i>his whole army</i>
			14:9	<i>his army</i>
			14:17	<i>his army</i>
			14:28	<i>the whole army</i>
מַחֲנֶה	camp / army	5	14:19	<i>camp of Israel</i>
			14:20	<i>camp of Egypt</i>
			14:20	<i>camp of Israel</i>
			14:24	<i>camp of the Egyptians</i>
			14:24	<i>camp of the Egyptians</i>
רֶכֶב	chariot	9	14:6	<i>his chariot</i>
			14:7	<i>chariots</i>
			14:7	<i>chariots</i>
			14:9	<i>chariots</i>
			14:17	<i>his chariots</i>
			14:18	<i>his chariots</i>
			14:23	<i>his chariots</i>
			14:26	<i>their chariots</i>
			14:28	<i>every chariot</i>



<i>Stem</i>	<i>Meaning</i>	<i>Occurrences</i>	<i>Verse</i>	<i>Translated as</i>
פָּרָשׁ	horseman	6	14:9	his <i>horsemen</i>
			14:17	his <i>horsemen</i>
			14:18	his <i>horsemen</i>
			14:23	his <i>horsemen</i>
			14:26	their <i>horsemen</i>
			14:28	<i>horseman</i>
יִבְשָׁה	dry ground	3	14:16	on <i>dry ground</i>
			14:22	on <i>dry ground</i>
			14:29	on <i>dry ground</i>

2.2.2.3 Observable Thematic Progression.

13:17

18 went
19 carry
20 set out
21 went
proceed
22

pillar
pillar
pillar (2x)

14:1

2

3

harden

4

pursue

army

be glorified

5

6

chariot

7

chariots (2x)

8

hardened

pursued

9

pursued

chariots

horsemen

army

10 marching

afraid

11

die

12

die

13

afraid

14

15 go forward

16

stretch out

dry ground

17

harden

chariots

horsemen

army

be honored

18

chariots

horsemen

be honored

19 moved

camp

pillar

going

20

camp (2x)

21 swept

stretch out

22

dry ground

23

pursued

chariots

horsemen

24

camp (2x)

pillar

25

chariots

26

chariots

horsemen

stretch out

27

stretch out

28

chariot

army

29 walked

dry ground

30

dead

31

feared

It may be observed that our text has much activity. There is movement all the time. The sons of Israel are on the move. Soon the Egyptians and their king, Pharaoh, will be on the move. Certainly, Yahweh too is on the move. Yahweh's movement is always for the benefit of the Hebrews and for the demise of the Egyptians.

The frequency of many words together sets a typical battle scene. Their movements are expressed by words like *set out*, *marching* and *go forward*. The Egyptians are in pursuit until they are hampered by Yahweh's presence. While the Israelites are only once depicted as being ready for war, we see the Egyptians alone able to present their war machine, which includes chariots and horses and which the Israelites do not have. The Egyptian king alone has a fighting-spirit as he is the one whose heart is hardened.

The Israelites on the other hand are filled with fear. They are afraid to die in the desert. It does not seem that they wanted freedom badly enough. Their philosophy was that "it was better to serve than to die". It turned out that they lacked faith. They did not believe in God and his servant Moses. They operated by sight rather than by faith. That is why they were exhorted by Moses to be still and see what Yahweh would do on their behalf.

The first movement of Yahweh is to move in Israel's defense. He moves to their rear and between them and their attackers. Yahweh's war-machine was different from that of the Egyptians. He only had the pillar, Moses and his staff, and the wind. Only these were necessary to open a path in the sea. All that Moses was expected to do was to stretch out his staff over the waters. Israel went through on dry ground. The Egyptians tried to go through but their wheels got stuck and came off. It is possible that the ground was not dry for them.

Yahweh wiped out the whole Egyptian army and gave Israel the victory. Before the Egyptians died they made an important admission, namely, that Yahweh was fighting for the Israelites. This is how they would come to honor Yahweh.

2.3 Commentary.

Salvation is always predicated by the compassion of God. He heard their cry and he “came down” to save them. The Lord surely came down to save the people of Israel, but he also came down to lead them and to protect them. They needed his salvation, his leading, his protection and his provision. In our text God proves himself as the one who finalizes Israel’s salvation by his leading and protection.

Motyer (2005:156-157) expresses our belief that Yahweh’s saving, leading and protection is part of a coherent story of selected facts in Israel’s history. The accusation that selective writing of history is tendentious is erroneous for all history, ancient or modern, has to be selective. It does not follow that there must have been a tampering with historical truth in order to make it fit into a preconceived literary idiom. It is history written with a perspective on the acts of God.

God is with his people in all his glory. It is that glory that in fact overcomes all that which threatens his pilgrim people. Even though their path is a place of conflict, their God can measure up to any threat that seeks to undo their salvation. Pharaoh and his forces, which are guilty of wanting to undo their freedom and bring them back into slavery, will find themselves fighting against the sovereign Lord of every force within the created order, and who will not hesitate to use them for the benefit of his people’s continued freedom. God’s dominion over the sea and the wind remained as evidence of his sovereignty, so that his will for his people’s freedom could not be frustrated.

Again, we agree with Motyer (2005:160) who sees that the underlying contest was for the ownership of the people of Israel. Who had the right to claim ownership of Israel? They themselves were not sure to whom they belonged. For a moment it seemed that their allegiance was with Pharaoh. They wondered if it would not have been better if they stayed in Egypt than to find their demise in the desert. The sea ahead will decisively settle that question. Their deliverance and redemption must

be entirely God's work, for they have no power to stand against the ensuing and claiming superpower.

a. 13:17-22 Israel's Route and Guidance.

We have already seen how this story depicts the scene of war. Israel has left Egypt "by their armies" (12:51). The people were "organized by fifties" (13:18). They are said to have gone out "with a high hand" (14:8), and the Egyptians on the other hand were preparing both to pursue and to overpower. God will fight for Israel and Pharaoh will contend with the mighty hand of God. Marching as they were for battle, Israel was not to lift up a single finger against their enemies; Yahweh was to fight for them. These verses set the stage for the drama in chapter 14.

i) God leads the troops (13:17-18).

Pharaoh let the people go because the hand of Yahweh was too heavy upon him. He could offer no resistance. God touched his firstborn son in the same way that he touched Yahweh's firstborn son. The hand of Pharaoh could not match the mighty hand of Yahweh, so he had to let go. In the light of this statement, it is strange that the Israelites should be thought to have *fled* (14:5). We shall deal with this when we comment on the verse in chapter 14, but the unfolding of the story leaves us with no other conclusion, but that the king of Egypt let them go.

The important point is that *God led* the released Israelites. God is omniscient and knows what every possible route holds for the pilgrims. The decision is given us by divine soliloquy (Breuggemann 1994:788) in the words, *God said*. The reason for their entry into the Promised Land from the east is given us in a subtle way ahead of the time, but that is not the immediate reason. The route they took begs the question, why not the *nearer* and quick route, the *Via Maris*? The road through the *Philistine country* was nearer. It was a well trodden trade and military route (Noth 1962:107). On that route they would *face battle* too soon and it would discourage

them from going further and encourage them *to return to Egypt*. Spence-Jones (2004:305) comments that the direct road from Tanis to Palestine—a road much frequented under the nineteenth dynasty—lay along the coast of the Mediterranean, and conducted to Philistia. If we look at the map, and observe the position of Tanis (now San) on the old Tanitic branch of the Nile, now nearly dried up, we shall see that the route which would naturally suggest itself to any one wishing to proceed to the Holy Land from Tanis would be one running almost due east, from Tanis to Pelusium, and from Pelusium, south of Lake Serbonis, to Rhinocolura; and thence, following the course of the coast to Gaza, Ashkalon, and Ashdod, the chief towns of the Philistine country.

It is true that a marsh region intervenes between Tanis and Pelusium which might seem to bar the route; but the Egyptian remains show that, in the times of the eighteenth and nineteenth dynasties, this obstacle was surmounted by means of an embankment which was carried across it, and that a direct road thus connected the two cities. Archeologists have found the coastal highway that led from Egypt into Canaan through Philistine territory was heavily fortified. God led His people by a different route because they were not ready to face war (Richards 1996:60). God led them in a way that prevented such a possibility and *led the people by the way of the desert, by the Red Sea*. Also, they first had to be trained to function as a nation. Fretheim's comment expresses our own view; that the divine concern for Israel is important in that it shows that God must take into account prevailing sociopolitical forces as well as people's emotional makeup in charting a way into the future (1991:150).

We recognize that the sea-fairing people that became known as the Philistines had not settled in that land *en masse* until round about the beginning of the twelfth century. This may be seen as an anachronism. This particular discussion does have bearing on the date of the exodus, or the writing, or the connotation *Philistine country*. Cole (1973:116) resolves this problem by translating it as "by the Philistia road". Also see Gen.26:1; it is possible that small numbers of Philistines may have been settled there before in trading settlements and during their invasions of Egypt, and only after their expulsion from Egypt did they settle *en masse* in Palestine.

Scripture does not hesitate to locate the Philistines at Garar as early as the time of Abraham (Gen. 21:32f). Of greater significance is the fact that the people were divinely led (Mackay 2001:240).

Critical scholarship makes too much of the literal “sea of reeds” (יַם־סוּפִּי *yam suph*) in stead of *Red Sea*, and by that narrows the possibilities of the crossing place through the sea. We cannot know for sure where the place of crossing might have been. There is much that remains highly tentative. Precise locations elude us and will probably remain undiscovered (Enns 2003:272). There are many proposals, but these are speculations. A decision here will also influence any proposed route through the wilderness. Even here we cannot be certain.

In any case the Sea at the Gulf of Aqabah, used for Solomon’s fleet, is referred to as the “Red Sea” (יַם־סוּפִּי *yam suph*) in 1Kg. 9:26. Considering their itinerary this cannot be where Israel crossed. The Gulf of Suez is also referred to as *yam suph* in Num.33:8-11. The point we are making is that *yam suph* need not necessarily mean “sea of reeds” and it refers to more than one body of water. Before we move on, there is one other suggestion to consider.

Batto (1984) posits that *suph* should mean “end” rather than “reeds”. He bases this on the reading *soph*, and translates it as “sea at the end of the world”. His view is supported by the widely accepted theological motif of (re-) creation in the book of Exodus. It introduces associations with creation and the waters of chaos in Genesis 1. The crossing of the sea is represented as a crossing of the waters of chaos, the sea at the end of the world. This view is by no means universally accepted, but at least it brings to the fore the theological significance of the sea.

We are told that Israel *went out from the land of Egypt being organized by fifties*. Contra the NIV translation, the Hebrew actually says, “The Israelites went up out of the land of Egypt organized by fifties”. Fifties were one of the smallest fighting units, and putting it this way still maintains the *war* motif of the text. It also obviates

the need to understand the Israelites as a capable fighting force (*cf.* Stuart 2006:324). The Lord acted as their leader and king.

ii) Cutting ties with Egypt (13:19).

Moses kept Israel's oath to Joseph. *Moses took the bones of Joseph with him.* Joseph's bones were not immediately taken to Canaan like his father, Jacob's were. It remained in Egypt until the exodus. Joseph became the one through whom God preserved alive the remnant of Israel. Bringing his bones out of Egypt brings closure to the Egyptian stage of Israel's existence. Mackay says that it served as a reminder to the Israelites that Egypt was not their homeland (2001:243). Taking the bones of Joseph was a clear demonstration that ties with Egypt were being severed completely. They were honoring their word to Joseph because he made the sons of Israel *solemnly promise* that they would take his bones with them when they left Egypt. Joseph's "prophecy" was now being fulfilled, and the blessing of God's favor was indicated by taking the bones from Egypt *with them*. Gispén puts it this way: "... Joseph's faith was not put to shame" (1982:139). In fact the root of the word translated 'took' (לָקַח *lā-qāḥ*) occurs four times in our text, and is indicative of the fact that the people themselves were taken out of Egypt.

The report serves the double function of fulfilling the expectation raised by Gen.50:25 and of asserting yet again that God has made possible the exodus of Israel (Durham 1987:186). We see that Exodus is vitally connected to Genesis. Israel's departure from Egypt is part of a larger plan that God has been orchestrating for hundreds of years and which is now coming to a climax (Enns 2000:270). The inclusion of Joseph's bones on the journey binds the exodus community to the promises in Genesis. Ultimately, Joseph's bones will be buried at Shechem in the track of land that Jacob bought for a hundred pieces of silver from the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem (Jos.24:32).

iii) Yahweh in the pillar (13:20-22).

The people *set out* from Egypt under Yahweh's guidance. The word for *set out* (נָסַח *nā·sā*) literally means to "pull out the tent pegs". It sets well with the historical setting of the Hebrews before the Promised Land. *Succoth* seems to have been their first rendezvous before setting out to *Etham*. Their initial route was along *the edge of the desert*. The location of neither Succoth nor Etham is certain. We are not particularly concerned with the geographical details. So far their movement was still predictable and it looked pretty normal.

The leadership of Yahweh was their experience day and night. *Yahweh went before the people to lead them in the way*. The theological idea of Yahweh's leadership is pivotal in the whole story. The method of God's leading was by means of a *pillar* (or column). The noun, pillar (עַמּוּד *ām·mūd*) occurs six times in our present text. The pillar was a sign of Yahweh's full presence that was stable and visible (Breuggemann 1994:789). The pillar took on characteristics that responded to the needs of the people. By day it was a *pillar of cloud* and at night it was a *pillar of fire*. We cannot say whether the cloud changed or whether with the darkness of night made the fire (shrouded by smoke) visible (*cf.* Stuart 2006:327). In 14:20 it was able to give light to the Israelites and darkness to the Egyptians. It is reminiscent of some of the plagues where Israel remained unharmed while the Egyptians were not benefited.

Our text mentions only the fact that the pillar gave light at night and the reason for that is to show that they were given the ability to *proceed by day and by night*. The awesome significance of this statement is that God did not remove the cloud when the people murmured and complained and disobeyed (Reid 2007:2). It must not be forgotten, however, that the pillar very much served the purposes of both leading and protecting (*cf.* 14:19-20). In the day it shielded them from the scorching sun of the desert, and at night it provided both heat and light.

The pillar was the people's guarantee that Yahweh was present with them all the way and all the time. Here was a supernatural, huge, and visible reminder that Yahweh was at the head of his people as they marched or encamped, whether by day or by night (Stuart 2006:328). The guiding presence was the manifestation of the glory of God, where the "cloud" expressed its "veiling" to humanity. Ps.105:39 speaks of this pillar as having the power to "screen" (Law 1967:37).

That the pillar is often interpreted as "cultic appurtenances" (Mann 1971:18) or "cultic devices" (Breuggemann 1994:789) or is given any "liturgical" significance, is born from the historical critical thinking of Graf-Wellhausen. Furthest to the left it tries to posit some natural phenomenon, like the volcanic and meteorological imagery, to explain the pillar. Others like Cross and Freedman (1953:20) see it as metaphors borrowed from Canaanite mythology. This is often more because of a philosophical stance rather than a historical one.

The point must in any case remain the guiding presence of Yahweh. *The pillar did not depart from the front of the people.* The word we translate as *the front* is literally "in the face of ..." or "in the sight of" The presence was visible and, in the words of Fretheim (1991:151) it served as a "tangible assurance" to the people. When the pillar moved the people moved, and when the pillar stopped the people encamped. There was a relationship between the people and their present Lord. We may take it that the presence of Yahweh did not depart from the people in their journey; at least until they arrived at Mount Sinai.

b. Ex.14:1 – 4 Yahweh's Plan Revealed To Moses.

As a king or a general would strategize for war, so Yahweh strategizes to meet Pharaoh and his forces. First, Pharaoh must be enticed to engage in this battle, and then he must have the unswerving resolve to do just that. The envisaged battle must have the desired outcome, namely that Yahweh be glorified and that his fame be established. Yahweh must be known as the one who rescued his people. The final decisive intention is not Israelite freedom, but Yahweh's glory, which is

decisive (Breuggemann 1994:792). When *Yahweh spoke to Moses*, he shared this strategy with him. We are not told what Moses' response was, but as the story moves on we know that he must have been in agreement with the plan.

i) Pharaoh is Deceived (14:1 – 3).

Verse 1 simply tells us that Yahweh told Moses his plan and gives him the instruction that must be relayed to the people. Though we may speak of an instruction, the verb to *return* (שׁוּב *šûb*) is jussive in meaning, and has the effect of a volitional verb. In any case the people would have recognized that they were going back. They were to go back to *encamp before Pi-Hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, opposite Baal Zephon*. We cannot be certain about the location of any of these places, and neither are we short of suggestions for their locations.

Wherever these places were located, it looks like Yahweh wanted Israel to encamp (חָנָה *hā·nā*, also jussive in meaning) in a “boxed-in” position, where Israel was to be surrounded by Pi-Hahiroth, Migdol, Baal Zephon and the sea. If we were to take the meaning of נֹכַח (*nkāḥ*) as “against” in stead of “opposite”, our speculation is that Pharaoh and his pursuing army were expected to make their approach from Baal Zephon. Their movement as instructed by Yahweh will nevertheless create the impression with Pharaoh that the Israelites are confused and lost. Yahweh guided the people away from the shortest and most logical route and into an eccentric series of turns designed to depict confusion (Durham 1987:187).

The story uses the narrator's omniscience. He knows what *Pharaoh will say*. This is a quaint way of saying what Pharaoh will think. What the Israelites do will bring Pharaoh to a particular and desired conclusion; that they have no way out because *they are shut in by the desert*. This very conclusion will be his motivation to try and re-capture the Israelites. The lure of having his slaves back was great indeed.

Pharaoh will *pursue* (רָדַף *rā-dāp̄*) the Israelites. Fleeing slaves must be pursued. He considered himself as not having given up ownership, and his pursuit must become a matter of his will. Yahweh facilitates Pharaoh's resolve by hardening his heart. In all three occurrences (14:4, 8, 17) in our text when the Egyptians' hearts are hardened, it is done by Yahweh. To *harden the heart of Pharaoh* was to render him morally hardened, obtuse and obdurate. He will pursue because of his hardness of heart, and he does not know that he acts according to Yahweh's behest. They will only find this out when they see how God rescues his people.

Yahweh's purpose is not the hardening of Pharaoh's heart. That is only the means to an end, which is to be *glorified by Pharaoh and his whole army*. To be glorified means to be given weight. The volitional desire of Yahweh is expressed in the cohortative form (וְאֶכְבְּדָהּ) of the verb. God's desire will not be frustrated, and the Egyptians will respond accordingly. When, once Pharaoh would not acknowledge Yahweh, he and his people will then *know* who he is. Perhaps a better way to say it is that they will *find out* who Yahweh is, and that it was he who has *done this to them*. Pharaoh and his people will acknowledge Yahweh. What was done to them is narrated later in verses 24-27.

c. Ex. 14:5 – 9. Pharaoh's Final Response.

This is Pharaoh's final response because after this there will be a complete severance between Egypt and Israel. Whether Pharaoh died in the Red Sea or not is debatable. Unless (according to our preference) we take literally in every way, that not even one of them was left (14:28), we can never know for sure. This will nevertheless be Pharaoh's last act involving the Israelites. With the battle-motif of the text, this is Pharaoh's final assault on the people and their leader, Moses. What was Pharaoh's final response, and to what exactly did he respond?

i) Pharaoh's Regret (14:5)

Pharaoh regretted the fact that his slaves, the Israelites left the land of Egypt. His regret emanates from two areas, namely that *the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled*, and that the Egyptians lost the services of the Israelites. In 13:17 we are told that Pharaoh let the people go. Later in this verse the Egyptians are said to have *cast the Israelites out*. These seem to contradict the notion that the people have fled. How do we reconcile these seemingly contradicting ideas?

As is often done, one explanation is given by asserting two different sources; the one believing that the people fled and another believing that the people were given permission to leave. The opinion is that there are at least two apparent presentations of the exodus, i.e. the "Exodus Flight" and the "Exodus Expulsion". If they were given permission to leave, then there is no need to flee. Why would they flee? We believe that such an explanation is unnecessary and that too much is made of this so-called incongruity.

Another view posited is that which says that the Israelites were given permission to go and worship Yahweh as they have requested; a three-day journey into the desert (Ex.3:18). They have overstepped the terms of their permission and were now forced to flee, either because they went further away than the three-day journey, or because they stayed longer than was allowed. Though this is a fairly good and plausible explanation, we are of the opinion that such an explanation too is unnecessary.

The simpler explanation is that the narrator used the idea of fleeing to heighten the battle-motif of the story. The idea anticipates the fact that Pharaoh will choose to pursue the Israelites. It creates the urgency in the minds of the Egyptians that they will see the need to pursue speedily. The chariots therefore serve two functions; that which enables the Egyptians to catch up with the Israelites, and that which provides them with the military strength to overcome the Israelites. Already the readers know that the Israelites stand no chance against the pursuing army. For Vervenne (1994:97) the use of the flight-motif depends on the description of this

pursuit, even though it functions perfectly within the broader context of the narratives which deal with the conflict between Pharaoh and Israel (Ex.7-11).

Besides, Pharaoh and the Egyptians regretted that they let the people go. They blamed themselves asking, *what have we done; to cast the Israelites out from serving us?* They regretted losing the services of their slaves. It certainly will have had an impact on the economy of the country. This regret became the motivation for their pursuit of the Israelites as *Pharaoh changed his heart towards the people*. It must have been part of the hardening process brought on by Yahweh. Pharaoh seeks to block the departure of the Israelites with the display of his military might.

ii) Pharaoh's Preparation (14:6-7).

Any attempted pursuit would require some preparation. The only possible reason to pursue the Israelites would be to bring them back so that they could continue to serve the Egyptians. The campaign would require an adequate war machine. Pharaoh took the lead, *harnessed his chariot and took his people along with him*. Chariots were formidable military weapons in those days. The process of taking his people included a selection. He *took six-hundred chariots of his choosing*. The participle of the root **בָּחַר** has the idea of a special selection by examination. These six hundred chariots were carefully chosen by Pharaoh. Besides the six hundred chosen chariots, *all the other chariots of Egypt with its captains* were taken along.

It is important to note that the word for chariot occurs nine times in our present text. It is believed that the Horites and the Hyksos introduced the chariot into warfare (Negev 1996:n.p.). The exact date of the arrival of the Horites in Palestine and Egypt is still in dispute. It is thought by some experts to have coincided with the conquest of Egypt by the Hyksos in the 18th century BC, but others date it a century later. Both in Egypt and in Palestine the Horites and the Hyksos made up the ruling nobility, the *maryannu*, who introduced the horse and chariot into warfare. Elwell and Beitzel (1988:1011) concur: The Hyksos introduced the war

chariot into Egypt, a military device later used to drive the Hyksos aliens out of Egypt. Horse and chariot warfare became the norm in the following centuries. John Davis (1971:160), however, makes an interesting comment: The Eighteenth Dynasty was noted for its standardization of the chariot as army equipment. Fortunately for Bible students two royal chariots of the Eighteenth Dynasty have survived to the present day and we are therefore not in the dark as to their construction and size. The Egyptians planned a massive military assault on the “fleeing” slaves. Stuart (2006:333) reminds us that the Israelites must have seemed easy prey for Pharaoh’s chariot-based army.

iii) Pharaoh’s Pursuit (14:8-9).

While we cannot discount the fact that the Egyptians pursued the Israelites because they were perceived as having fled and because of the loss of their services, ultimately it must be because *Yahweh hardened the heart of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt*. God made him change his heart towards the people (v.5). God hardened the heart of the Egyptian king, precisely, so that he would pursue the Israelites (v.4a). God was drawing Pharaoh out to “battle”. Pharaoh did not know that it was Yahweh, whom he did not know, who was manipulating him to come out to battle. The hardening by Yahweh did not violate Pharaoh’s own intention in any case. He was drawn into this battle by his desire to recapture his departed slaves. Pharaoh did not know that his battle would be against Yahweh rather than against Israel.

Pharaoh and his whole army *pursued after the sons of Israel*. His intention might have been only to recapture the Israelites and to make them his slaves again. Even though Pharaoh liked to believe that the Israelites were fleeing, the narrator reminds us that, unlike slaves who are fleeing, *the sons of Israel were leaving with hand being high*. That means that they were leaving Pharaoh’s domain with boldness. Their organized marching formation (13:18) was perhaps a demonstration of their boldness. The Israelites did not yet know about the pursuing

Egyptians, and their travels up until this point would have been filled with enthusiasm.

Finally the pursuing Egyptians *overtook them as they were camping at the sea-side*. The Israelites were camping where they were in front of the sea. The whole Egyptian war machine caught up with the Israelites. The narrator is careful to mention *all of the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen and his army*. It seems that they came through Pi Hahiroth and were heading towards Baal Zephon. There, the confrontation would place the Israelites in a vulnerable position.

d. Ex.14:10 – 14. Israel's Fear and Encouragement.

The Israelites were fairly at ease with the way things were developing. It may not even have crossed their minds that the Egyptians would want to re-capture them and take them back into slavery. When they finally saw the Egyptians in pursuit of them, they were overcome with fear. The narrator employs an imagery of battle preparation when he tells us that the Israelites *beheld the Egyptians marching behind them*. The Israelites *became very afraid*. The people were in great distress (אֲרָרָה yā·rē).

They *cried out to Yahweh*. Previously Yahweh heard their cry without them necessarily having cried out to him. Here they cried out to Yahweh and they expected an answer from Moses. Their enquiry was about the reason why they were brought *to die in the desert*. Was it *because there were no graves in Egypt?* That could not have been the case because Joseph, whose bones they took, was buried there. They suspected some malicious intention on the part of Moses and Yahweh, but could not understand why.

The narrator now gives us a window into the past, and the people's real unwillingness to be rescued from slavery in Egypt. They wanted Moses to admit

that they were unwilling by asking, *is this not what we told you in Egypt when we said 'Leave us'* They wanted to continue serving the Egyptians as this was a better option than for them *to die in the desert*. It is understandable that they would rather be slaves than be dead. Their pessimism was ill-founded entirely. They were wrong on two counts; they thought the Egyptians were coming to kill them, and they did not believe that God would rescue them (Stuart 2006:335). It is, however, ironic that the Israelites were willing rather to serve the Egyptians. The word for 'serve' (עָבַד 'ā·bād) can also be translated 'obey' and 'worship'. This irony is heightened when one considers that they came to the desert with the original intention to worship Yahweh.

Because this question is leveled at Moses, he responds from a position of faith in Yahweh. Moses gives them three reassuring imperatives (Breuggemann 1994:793). He tells them not to be afraid. Assurance is given to override fear. Faith was able to see what Yahweh could do. They are exhorted to *stand and see the salvation which Yahweh will perform* that very day. Yahweh was going to rescue (יְשׁוּעָה y^ošū·ā(h)) them, and they are excluded as an agent in the liberation. They would be delivered from this attacking army. These Egyptians who were alive in their sight will not be seen alive again. That they will *never again see them* does not mean that they will not have a visual purview of the Egyptians, for later they do see them dead on the sea shore.

The Israelites are instructed to *keep still* (שָׁרְרָה ḥā·rēš). While they were to be silent, they were actually instructed to take no action. The only action to be taken in this situation was to be taken by Yahweh. *Yahweh will engage in battle* for them. The battle was between Yahweh and Pharaoh. The people must choose to serve Yahweh rather than Pharaoh because he will come out victorious from this battle.

e. Ex. 14:15 - 18 Yahweh's Final Resolve.

Yahweh was about to do a miracle for his name's sake. He was going to make himself known by doing two things, namely to make a way for the people through the sea, and to harden Pharaoh's heart for the last time before he wipes him out, but not before he acknowledges Yahweh. Yahweh was going to use a man; Moses, an inanimate object; the staff of God, and nature; the east wind, to redeem his people from the oppressive Egyptian regime. The miracle was an indication of God's presence with his people. Moses is made privy to these plans of Yahweh. Moses was going to play a pivotal role in the redemption of Israel, especially in terms of the outcome it hopes to produce, namely that the Egyptians acknowledge Yahweh, and that the Israelites place their faith and allegiance in Yahweh and in Moses, Yahweh's servant.

i) Instructing Israel (14:15).

Strangely, Yahweh asked Moses "*Why are you crying out to me?*" We cannot point out from the text that Moses cried out to Yahweh. He had every reason to do so though. The people complained to Moses when they saw the approaching Egyptians. That Moses would have complained about this is incongruent with his motivational instruction to the people. He was convinced that Yahweh was going to fight on their behalf (v.14). It cannot refer to the cry of the people because this verb (קָעָהוּ) is in the masculine singular, and it speaks of a cry out of desperation. Crying, nevertheless, constituted a lack of faith. The odd-ness of this question will have to remain unresolved, but Moses is instructed to *tell the sons of Israel to go forward* or to set out (נָסַע nā·sā). The verb expresses Yahweh's desire for the people to set out. Yahweh issued an imperative that called for daring action on the part of the Israelites. They were to go forward. "Forward" was going to be through the sea.

ii) Instructing Moses (14:16).

Moses was to instruct the Israelites what to do, and he was now also given instructions for what he must do. He was to wield the staff of the Lord. Yahweh was going to employ Moses and his staff to divide the sea. It is extraneous to ask whether Moses or Yahweh divided the sea, or whether Yahweh used Moses or the wind to do so. It was Yahweh who performed this miracle. Moses, the staff and the east wind were all Yahweh's instruments. Moses, however, is confirmed to be the man of God. He was instructed to *lift up his staff and stretch out* (נָטָה) *his hand over the sea to divide it*. The root of this verb occurs four times (14:16, 22, 26 and 27).

The sea was divided so that Moses could *bring the sons of Israel through it on dry ground*. The fact that the people went through on dry ground is an important one. It occurs three times in our present text (14:16, 22 and 29), emphasizing the amazing success of the deliverance for Israel contrasted with the success that brought demise to the Egyptians, whose wheels got stuck when they pursued the Israelites.

iii) Instructing Pharaoh and His Army (14:17-18).

What is often said about Pharaoh is now true about the whole Egyptian army. As Yahweh hardened the heart of Pharaoh, so he *hardened the hearts of the Egyptians* so that they may follow after the Israelites into the sea. Yahweh knows that he will be honored in the middle of the sea *by Pharaoh, and by all his army, his chariots and his horsemen*. "Chariotry" is preferred because the noun here is in the singular form (also Cole 1973:119). Yahweh instructs Pharaoh and his army indirectly by hardening their hearts to follow their resolve.

How are the Egyptians to honor Yahweh? Verse 18 gives the answer. *The Egyptians will know that I am Yahweh, and I will be honored by Pharaoh, by his chariots and his horsemen*. They will come to this knowledge by experiencing the

awesome power of Yahweh. Acknowledging Yahweh will be Pharaoh's way of conceding that Yahweh is victorious and greater than he is. He must know that nobody can frustrate the resolve of Yahweh. Pharaoh will concede and Yahweh will be confirmed as the supremely sovereign one.

f. Ex. 14: 19 – 22. Israel's Protection and Salvation.

The presence of Yahweh was made evident, and the descriptions of that presence conjured the imagery of Yahweh moving into position to ready himself for battle. He demonstrated a battle strategy in the way he positioned himself. The strategy benefited the Israelites and it put the Egyptians at a disadvantage. Yahweh was the main mover in what played itself out at that point. Everyone else just followed the circumstantial prompts that were created by Yahweh. Breuggemann (1994:794) aptly remarks that these verses are an extravagant way of characterizing the vigilant protection God gives Israel, which Moses promised in verses 13-14. Yahweh was proving his Presence still, rescuing his people and decimating a powerful and well-organized Egyptian force with no exertion of effort by Israel (Durham 1987:195).

i) Yahweh Positions Himself (14:19-20).

The angel of God can also be spoken of as a messenger of God. As was the case in chapter three at the burning bush, the angel (מַלְאָךְ *māl'āk*) of God is in fact God himself. Although 'angel' means simply a 'messenger' or 'courier', it is clear that the angel of the Lord is not merely human (Mackay 2001:255). It was a way in which God chose to reveal himself. While we cannot describe what this angel looked like, it suffices to say that the term connotes the manifest presence of God. The angel of the Lord was frequently equated with God. God, who was leading the Israelites, *moved from the front of the camp of Israel, and moved to the rear.* The

idea of an Israelite camp (מַחֲנֵה) *mă·h^āně(h)*) and an Egyptian camp evokes the imagery of a military setting.

The physical manifestation (theophany) of Yahweh was in the *pillar of cloud* which *moved from the front of them and stood behind them*. In this case it is quite likely that the angel of God has reference to the pillar of cloud; they are equated (c.f. Clements 1972:87). Be that as it may, Yahweh went and *stood between* the Israelite camp and the Egyptian camp. The pillar of cloud, which was between the two camps, *was dark on the one side*; evidently on the side of the Egyptians. The pillar *gave light at night* on the side of the Israelites. With the pillar between the two camps, *they could not draw near to one another all night*. In fact, the Israelites were able to move on, while the Egyptians were restricted in their movement, at least, the movement that would satisfy the yearnings of their hardened hearts. ‘Cloud’ suggests impenetrability to the Egyptians. It was a divinely imposed barrier (Mackay 2001:244, 255). In this way Yahweh protected the Israelites; now he was going to save them. The barrier also only seems to be a temporary one, because they must be allowed to pursue the Israelites into the sea and so meet their final demise.

ii) Israel Goes Through the Sea (14:21-22).

The man, the staff and the wind all work in tandem under Yahweh’s direction to bring to pass the great rescue. *Moses stretched out his hand over the sea* as Yahweh had instructed him to do. We accept that the staff must have been in his hand. Yahweh *swept the sea with a strong east wind all night*. The east wind was the instrument which Yahweh used to *rent* (בָּקַעַ *bā·qā*) the *waters* apart. Stuart (2006:342) interestingly reminds us that the east wind was often seen as a destructive or punishing phenomenon, because it was blisteringly dry and hot. Here we have the idea of a forceful dividing of the sea. “Waters” always appear in the plural form. The waters are rent apart to create a path through the sea. Yahweh was the one renting the waters apart.

The narrator emphasized the fact that the miracle performed had as its secondary purpose *to make dry ground* (יַב־בָּאֲשָׁה) *yăb·bā·šā(h)*). Some scholars see here that Yahweh is replicating the coming of dry land in creation. Of course, the primary purpose was to provide for the Israelites a way of escape through the sea. The primary and the secondary purposes of opening the sea are now fulfilled. Breuggemann (1994:794) says: “In this moment of liberation, God does a deed as powerful, original, and life-giving as the very newness of creation”. The sons of Israel were able to go *through the midst* (תַּוְּכָה) *tā·wěk* of the sea on dry ground. The fact that the path goes through the midst of the sea is explained in a more graphic way; *the waters were a wall on the right and on the left of them*. The Israelites are themselves in the midst so that these walls are on their sides. They went through the sea as an act of faith in Yahweh.

It is uncertain where the Israelites crossed the Red Sea. Two proposals are presented as plausible possibilities, namely the northern part of the Gulf of Suez, and the Gulf of Aqaba. The problem with the latter proposal is that its accompanying proposal for Mount Sinai is improbable because it would be too far from Egypt for the Israelites to reach in the short time reflected in the narrative. A Gulf of Suez crossing in the region of the Bitter Lakes is more realistic. Elwell and Beitzel (1988:2143) states, Sinai is said to be three days’ journey from Egypt and 11 days from Kadesh (Ex 5:3; Dt 1:2). The best recent suggestion is that Mt Sinai is Jebel Sin Bishar, a striking isolated peak in the Suder plain. Its Arabic name may mean “heralding of the law” or “the laws of man.” It lies at the right relative distances from both the Egyptian border and Kadesh-barnea. There is sufficient water in the vicinity to sustain a large group of people such as the Israelite tribes. Be that as it may, both crossings proposals are so located (running north to south) that an east wind would traverse the width of the gulfs, which would be the shortest route through the sea. In any case, it cannot only be the wind to have caused the sea to open, for even if it blew like a nozzle it would not explain the fact that the water stood like two walls on the sides of the passing Israelites. Jamieson, *et.al.* (1997:n.p.) comment:

Suppose a mere ebb tide caused by the wind, raising the water to a great height on *one side*, still as there was not only “dry land,” but, according to the tenor of the sacred narrative, a wall on the right hand and on the left (Ex 14:22), it would be impossible on the hypothesis of such a natural cause to rear the wall on the *other*. The idea of divine interposition, therefore, is imperative; and, assuming the passage to have been made at Mount Attakah, or at the mouth of Wady Tawarik, an *east* wind would cut the sea in that line.

g. Ex. 14: 23 – 25. Pharaoh’s Final Pursuit.

Pharaoh and the Egyptians are now ready for their final pursuit. They will never again after this pursue the sons of Israel. Their going through the sea is however not an act of faith in Yahweh. We must remember that the pillar was between the Israelite and the Egyptian camps and that this was Yahweh’s means of keeping them apart (*cf.* v.20). The Egyptians would be taking a huge risk to pursue the Israelites into the sea, but their stubbornness would not allow them to do anything else (Stuart 2006:340).

i) The Egyptians Pursue the Israelites (14:23 – 25a).

One can only assume that the pillar of cloud moved behind along with the Israelites as they went through the sea. Only with this as a possibility, were the Egyptians able to pursue the Israelites. They *went after them with every horse* they had. Every chariot and horseman *went through the midst of the sea*. At this point it seems that the Egyptians had the same experience as the Israelites with respect to the gaping sea. In fact they may have decided to go through because the Israelites had and that like the Israelites, they should have no problems.

They obviously made a mistake to think that they could go through because the Israelites did so. What the Egyptians did not know was that Yahweh, who opened the sea for the Israelites, did so solely for Israel’s benefit. It was in fact their hardened hearts that made them pursue under these odd conditions; without any

restraint or without any fear. The narrator tells us the time of the Egyptian pursuit. It happened during the third watch. He refers to it as *the night watch before the morning* (בִּקְרַר *bō·qěṛ*). That means that it was shortly before daybreak when they entered the gaping sea. This, the darkest hour before dawn, was traditionally the time for attack, when men's spirits are at their lowest (Cole 1977:122).

The towering God acted. *Yahweh looked down from the pillar of fire and cloud upon the camp of the Egyptians*. Not that the Egyptians were encamped, but that they are referred to as the camp (מַחֲנֵה *mă·ḥ^āně(h)*) a designation for the whole military group of fighters. The theophanic pillar was an indication of Yahweh's localized presence, from whence he acted. The looking down of Yahweh introduces the actions that follow. He *threw the camp of the Egyptians into confusion*. They were caused to panic. The verb to throw into confusion (הִמָּם *hā·mām*) occurs thirteen times in the Old Testament and in ten Yahweh is the subject as in this instance. The Egyptians are the object. The irony is that those who thought that the Israelites were confused and being entangled in the land (14:3), were now themselves confused and entangled in the sea.

Yahweh caused the wheels of their chariots to come off, and led them into difficulty. It appears that the wheels of the chariots operated with great difficulty. They got stuck. The dry ground of the Israelites was not dry for the Egyptians and they moved with difficulty (כִּבְדֻתָא *k^ēbē·dūt*). The basic meaning is 'to be heavy'. It is possible that because of this difficulty of movement the wheels came off (סִוֵּר *sūr*). This is also the possible source of our idiom when things go haywire. That day things did not go well for the Egyptian army.

ii) The Egyptians Acknowledge Yahweh (14:25b).

Soon enough the Egyptians realized that they were in trouble. They certainly had a mobility problem. Their circumstances pointed to the real reason for their

difficulties. They recognized that *Yahweh was fighting* for the Israelites *against the Egyptians*. That was what Yahweh wanted to achieve; that Pharaoh and the Egyptians would acknowledge him (*cf.* v.17). This they refused to do up until this stage. Now they finally do. Thus the Egyptians are made to confess what the Israelites themselves have doubted. Ironically, the Egyptian praise becomes a theme for Israel's praise (Fretheim 1991:155).

They recognized that they were no match for Yahweh, and the only way out is to *flee from the face of Israel*. They who thought that the Israelites were fleeing (14:5) wanted now to flee from those they pursued. Also they who were chasing behind the Israelites wanted now to flee from their face (פָּנֵיהֶם *pā·ně(h)*). Whether they recognized Yahweh's actions or their need to flee from Israel, by it they acknowledged Yahweh both as supreme and as Israel's God.

h. Ex.14:26 – 28 Yahweh's Deliverance Brought By Moses.

Yahweh had done enough to convince the Egyptians that he is sovereign Lord, but the job was not yet completed. There could be no possibility for the Egyptians to regroup as he had already promised that the Israelites would never again see these Egyptians (v.13).

i) Moses Stretches Out His Hand (14:26-27a).

Yahweh again showed that Moses was his approved servant, and he invites him to participate in sealing the victory over the Egyptians. Moses is instructed again to *stretch his hand over the sea*. This time the waters will not be opened apart, but it *will return over the Egyptians*. The completeness of the Egyptian demise is given by the reiteration that the waters will return *over their chariots and over their horsemen*.

Moses did according to the instruction given by Yahweh. Again the narrator mentions the time when the waters returned to its previous state. It was *at day break* when the sea *returned to its perpetual movement*. The sea returned to the state it was *before* (בֹּקֶר *bō·qě*); literally, in the (previous) morning. The rescue of the Israelites happened at night and was concluded at day break. At daybreak the Israelites could see the entire process clearly.

ii) The Waters Return (14:27b-28).

The Egyptians were fleeing from the Israelites because Yahweh was fighting for them. They were fleeing because their pursuit of the Israelites became too difficult. As they were fleeing, they found themselves *fleeing into* (אֶרְאָה *qā·rā*) *the closing waters*. Literally, they were fleeing to meet with the waters. If they were fleeing away from the Israelites and into the closing water, then the waters were closing from the entry side. Ironically, the Israelites were hemmed in before the waters opened, but now the Egyptians found themselves hemmed in with the waters closing.

Yahweh swept the Egyptians away in the midst of the sea. The word for *swept* (נָעַר *nā·ă*) could be expressed in this way: Yahweh shook off the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. Yahweh did so by covering *every chariot and horseman* with the returning waters. The *whole army of Pharaoh*, who went after the Israelites into the sea, was drowned. *Not even one of them was left*. Not a single Egyptian survived. The victory of Yahweh was complete.

j. Ex.14:29 – 31 Israel's Victory and Faith.

The battle motif of this story now comes to a close. This was a decisive battle. It settled the question on who was Lord; Yahweh or Pharaoh? It also settled the

question on whom Israel belongs to; Yahweh or Israel? Whoever wins the battle determines who is Lord and owner. Their motivations already create in the mind of the reader an affinity with the protagonist. Pharaoh sought to recapture while Yahweh sought to free. Yahweh leads and Pharaoh chases. Pharaoh attacks and Yahweh defends.

i) Israel's Victory (14:29-30).

There is a definite contrast created in this narrative. The Egyptians could not manage to go through the sea, but the Israelites *walked on dry ground in the midst of the sea*. The Egyptians found great difficulty going through, while the emphasis of dry ground reflects Israel's relative ease. This contrast is introduced here by the use of the conjunction, *but*. That the waters were *a wall on the right and on the left of them*, demonstrates the contrast in that the waters stood "upright" when the Israelites went through the sea, but it "collapsed" upon the Egyptians when they tried.

In the same way as the waters stood, the Israelites stood in the battle; and in the same way as the waters collapsed, the Egyptians collapsed in the battle. Since it was Yahweh who fought, he is the one who *rescued the Israelites that day*. Their victory was confirmed when they *saw the Egyptians lying dead upon the shore* (פִּי הַיָּם *śā-pā(h)*) *of the sea*. This Hebrew word literally means "lips" or "speech". The sea bore testimony and pronounced the Egyptians dead, and by that declaring an Israelite victory. Cole (1973:122) eloquently states that this is a very graphic touch, as an eye-witness account.

ii) Israel Responds with Faith (14:31).

Israel was never expected to have blind faith. Their faith was to be based upon what Yahweh has done. Yahweh demonstrated his great power to them. The

Israelites *saw the great hand which Yahweh used* against the Egyptians. The contest between Yahweh and Pharaoh was over. The mighty hand of Yahweh prevailed over the heavy hand of Pharaoh. Faith among the Israelites was the result of this great feat of Yahweh.

The faith of the Israelites found expression in two ways. Firstly, they *feared Yahweh*. Their fear (יָרֵא *yā·rē*) was not one of anxiety or frightfulness; it was one of reverence and respect. Their fear emanated from their sense of awe. Secondly, *they believed in Yahweh*. They had confidence in Yahweh. He proved himself to be true. They had a similar level of confidence in Moses. *They believed in Yahweh and his servant, Moses*. Here was an affirmation of both Yahweh and Moses, and it paves the way for Moses to mediate between them and Yahweh. Their believing was established after their deliverance. “Believing” and “establish” come from the same Hebrew root (אָמַן *’ā·mān*).

2.4 Theological Reflection.

Yahweh is a miracle-working God; for his people’s sake and for his own glory. God’s miraculous rescue of Israel at the Red Sea was the event by which they were made the people of God. It was a conflict for paternal power over them. Pharaoh did not give up possession and would try to reclaim and take back his slaves to Egypt. Yahweh claimed them as his firstborn son. The lure of having his slaves back was great indeed. When Pharaoh wanted to keep Yahweh’s firstborn son, Yahweh took the lives of Egypt’s firstborn sons until Pharaoh let go.

Israel was now God’s possession. Every connection with Egypt had to be severed. They had also to take the bones of Joseph as they had promised to do through their forefathers. Joseph’s “prophecy” was to be fulfilled, and would be an indication of the Lord’s blessing upon them, for the Lord had orchestrated this for hundreds of years (Enns 2000:270). Egypt was not their homeland (Mackay 2001:243).

The omniscient God is the one who will lead his people with his pillar. The pillar was a sign of Yahweh's full presence that was stable and visible (Breuggemann 1994:789). The pillar took on characteristics that responded to the needs of the people. He knew and anticipated every response of Pharaoh and the Egyptians. He knew the Israelites, anticipating what their response would be should they face resistance by the warring Canaanites. They would then face battle too soon. He knew what every possible route held for them. The Lord knew which way was the best one to take to the Promised Land. The concern of Yahweh for Israel had to take into account the prevailing sociopolitical and emotional contexts. Everything the Lord did was based upon his omniscience, and for the benefit of his reputation and his people.

The miraculous rescue was needed for the people themselves to know where they belonged. Right up to the point of rescue, the people vacillated, calling out to Yahweh, yet considered themselves better off serving Pharaoh, then coming out to serve Yahweh. The miraculous rescue turned fleeing slaves into a people who testified about God's miraculous deliverance; a people who believed in Yahweh and Moses. This miraculous intervention would convince them that Yahweh was mightier than Pharaoh, and that he is a better king to have and to serve. Yahweh, their king, alone rescued them from oppression.

Though Yahweh is sovereign he intimated his strategy to Moses. God was willing to be in partnership. Moses was to stretch out his hand with God's rod in it to divide the sea. Though the outcome was for Yahweh's glory and acknowledgement, Moses too was believed in by the people. Moses, who was before accused of malicious intent, was now accepted as leader and mediator of the people.

Yahweh provided an escape when there was no hope. Their hopelessness already saw them as candidates for death and burial in the desert. God wrought the impossible and created new life within a new existence as the people of God. The God who was able to dry up the sea and make a road in its depths for the redeemed to cross over, is able also to give his people eternal life (Is. 51:10f). He

is able to defeat the powers of resistance to bring forth new life (Childs 1974:238). In this moment of liberation, God does a deed as powerful, original, and life-giving as the very newness of creation (Breuggemann 1994:794). Providing hope is the grace of God displayed. Though the response of the people in relation to God was initially not that of faith, it culminates in faith (Stuart 2006:335). Faith overcomes fear. They were encouraged not to be afraid but to be still, seeing how Yahweh will engage in battle on their behalf (14:13-14).

Yahweh was able to use anything or anyone as his instruments for deliverance. His deliverance came by supernatural and natural means. He could use miraculous and ordinary means. He could use the swaying of Moses' rod to split the sea; and he could call the east wind to lay bare the sea bed for his people to cross over with ease. The miraculous included the waters to stand as walls on both sides of the path through the sea; and the ordinary caused the Egyptians to drown in that same water. The supernatural created dry ground for the Israelites; and the natural was the mud that was to be expected there, causing the wheels of the Egyptian chariots to stick and come off. We see the mighty hand of God at work in the wonderful and in the ordinary (Childs 1974:238). Pharaoh's chariots, horses and horsemen were no match for Yahweh whose only weapons were a staff in the hand of his servant and the wind. The sovereign Lord of every force within the created order will not hesitate to use them for the benefit of his people. Yahweh's deliverance was decisive, comprehensive and complete.

The redemption of God required the people to follow. His redemption is never forced upon those he rescues. It may have been forced upon the oppressors as it was upon Pharaoh and the Egyptians. They did according to the behest of Yahweh. Oppression provokes God's intervention. Forces that seek to forcefully incarcerate an innocent people invite God's intervention. Whether from free will or by compulsion, Yahweh's sovereign will is never frustrated by humans. God's intervention aims at getting the redeemed to respond in faith and worship. Israel believed in Yahweh and in his servant, Moses. Redemption must create a people of faith and of praise. Their path must be from slavery through salvation to worship.

The people experienced the fact that the Presence is there for their guidance and for their protection. The pillar was a “tangible assurance” of Yahweh’s presence with the people (Fretheim 1991:151). The pillar went ahead of the people leading them. But when the forces resisting freedom threatened, the pillar of Presence moved to the rear. Isaiah 58:8 says that the “glory of the Lord will be your rear guard”. The people had a foretaste of the joys of life in the presence of their God, Yahweh. So, the Presence was for the people of Yahweh, and against their oppressors.

The people of God also had to realize the difference between them and their adversaries. As it had been during the time of the outpouring of the plagues, so it is with their redemption. The judgment of Yahweh was upon the Egyptians, while his favor was upon his people. God dealt differently with the land of Goshen, where his people lived; they had no swarms of flies; their livestock did not die; they had no hailstorm; when the Egyptians were in darkness, the Israelites lived in light; and their firstborn were not killed by God’s angel. God will again deal differently with them at the Red Sea; the pillar of Yahweh would provide light for the Israelites and darkness for the Egyptian camp. The Israelites were a people of Yahweh’s grace and favor. The pillar was a divinely imposed barrier making this distinction (Mackay 2001:244).

God is able to make all things, even perceived bad things, work for the good of his people and his cause. The perceived evil that Moses did by bringing them out of Egypt against their better knowledge turned out for their salvation. When they saw graves, God created for them a highway through the sea. They needed only to be still and see God’s intervention. The Egyptians, who ironically thought that the Israelites were confused and hemmed in, actually had themselves become confused and hemmed in by the sea. Yahweh was able to work day and night to procure his people’s salvation.

Yahweh is able to assert his authority over the nations. The Egyptians were expected to come to the knowledge of who Yahweh is. They were to honor Yahweh in their acknowledgement that he is the supremely sovereign one.

Yahweh is willing to take the responsibility of his harsh action against them to bring them to that knowledge. *The Egyptians will know that I am Yahweh, and that I have done this to them* (14:4). Yahweh said that by this he would be *honored and known* by the Egyptian king, his army, his chariots and his horsemen (14:17-18). God was willing to cause Egypt to become hard in order to make the rescue a great work to be admired by the whole world. The greater the obstacles are, the greater the victory will be.

Yahweh was not like Pharaoh. Yahweh was the protagonist and Pharaoh the antagonist. Pharaoh sought to recapture while Yahweh sought to free. Pharaoh pursued the people while Yahweh led them. Pharaoh attacked them during the traditional time (just before daybreak), while Yahweh moved to defend them day and night. Yahweh is for his people.

There are many allusions to the exodus in the rest of the Bible; each of them reflecting theologically on what they took for granted as a momentous event in the history of the Israelites. We may simply list some such allusions in the Old Testament as follows: in the Psalms, Ps.74:12-13; Ps.77:12-20; Ps.78:11-14; Ps.78:42-53; Ps.99:4-7; Ps.103:5-8; Ps.105:23-39; Ps.135:5-9 and Ps.136:10-16. In the Prophets, Is.51:10-11; Is.52:10-12; Is.63:11-14; Jer.2:6; Jer.23:7-8; Dan.9:15-16; Hos.11:1-5; Am.4:10; and Mic.6:4. We shall look at these allusions in order to derive an Old Testament theological interpretation of the exodus from Egypt.

In the four excerpts from Psalms 74-78 we find the psalmist struggling within himself as he witnesses the evil and injustice in the world. In the seventy-fourth Psalm, Van Gemeren (1991:486) reminds us that God's people in exile are weeping over the destruction of the temple which symbolized the presence and protection of God. What the heathen had done 'in the midst' of the sanctuary was as nothing to what God at the exodus had done in the midst of the earth (Kidner 1975:268). The community nevertheless affirms the creative and redemptive powers of God their king by remembering what he had done to the Egyptians showing his supremacy and sovereignty (Ps.74:13-14).

God's works in their variety in creation, redemption, judgment and salvation was seen in his holy power over the Egyptians, for all the nations to witness his mighty arm. His greatest salvific deeds prove his incomparability (Kraus 1993:114). Yahweh is the divine warrior. The waters and the forces of nature received special powers (Ps.77:16-17) to affect the liberation of God's people. These powers were the executors of the salvation and of the wrath of God. The invisible God was present in Israel's liberation and in the judgment of their oppressors (Ps.77:19).

The people's failure to appreciate the blessings of God was largely due to their forgetfulness and therefore disregard for God's redemptive intentions with them. Westermann (1989:105) reminds us that the 'historical credo' was to be a living reality for Israel. It was supposed to function as a means to magnify God in the gloomy present. Delitzsch (1902:404) correctly says that therein lays a hope, which makes the retrospective glance into the better past a source of consolation for God's people. But they were no longer moved by the history of redemption (Ps.78:11) as it no longer motivated them to live as Yahweh's covenant people. They were called to sanctify his name with everlasting remembrance. "Remembrance" is nothing other than to live in honor of the God and in gratitude to him who personally delivered them from oppression and bondage. Yahweh brought adversity to the Egyptians on the one hand and blessings to his people on the other (Ps.78:42-53).

In Ps.99 the sovereign and glorious rule of God is seen by his enthronement, which makes his presence accessible to his subjects; here, particularly through his mediators (v.6). Tate (1990:n.p) notes that the kingship of Yahweh correlates with the Mosaic declaration that the Divine Warrior of Israel, Yahweh, would "reign forever and ever" (Ex.15:18). Everything, whether it is God's revelation or his acts of creation and redemption, reveals his greatness, awesomeness and holiness (Van Gemeren 1991:636). Every revelation of his otherness is the glory of his majestic power and justice in his acts of judgment and deliverance. He spoke to his mediators in history through the cloud; among others, clearly a reference to Moses

in the exodus narrative. God has shown himself to be the God of grace, which has transformed the history of Israel into a *Heilsgeschichte* (Weiser 1959:642).

The psalmist's concern for righteousness and justice is almost tangible in this psalm. His reference to its establishment by the Lord in the narrative of the deliverance demonstrates that concern. God is concerned with the establishment of righteousness in this world. Weiser (1959:661) succinctly states that God has shown his righteousness to be a succession of glorious acts which run through the history of Israel. As the Lord has delivered from evil and oppression, so also, it has become incumbent upon us to deliver from evil and oppression. The Lord's forgiveness, redemption and sustenance must be emulated by his people.

God's fidelity as Creator-Ruler and as Redeemer of his people is celebrated in Psalm 105. Its historical reflection leads to a reflection on his mighty acts in redemption. The psalmist describes the exodus in the colors that provide hope for the exiles (Mays 1994:339). God added to their number and made them "too numerous" (Dahood 1970:59) for the Egyptians. The Lord delivered his people with supplies of silver and gold, and so initiated their prosperity too. To the Egyptians he gave hail as their rain – v.32 (Dahood 1970:61). The oppressed were blessed, while the oppressor's "blessing" actually became their punishment.

In Psalm 135:5-9 Yahweh is great as Creator and as Judge. He is greater than all other gods and none of them can be compared to him. The greatness of the Lord is seen in his rule over all creation, to the exclusion of other gods (Ex.15:12f). His greatness extends to his sovereignty (Perowne 1989:424). He harnesses the heavens and nature for benefit or for judgment, as he pleases. Historically, he has done so for Israel's benefit on the one hand and for Egypt's judgment on the other. Wilcock (2001:248) beautifully sums up this psalm saying, "It looks back to God the Creator (vv.5-7), forward to God the Judge (vv.13-14), and at the heart of its faith to God the Redeemer (vv.8-12)."

Many commentators see Psalm 136 as a companion to Psalm 135 in its celebration of the Creator and Redeemer. The exiles were there in principle

(Wilcock 2001:251). The dividing of the Red Sea asunder as an act of loving kindness will be recounted forever. God, on their account suspended the natural course of the waters that they may pass through it on dry ground (Kimhi 1973:75). They were to sing this Redemption Hymn in their annual celebration of the Passover Feast as a perpetual reminder of the redeeming and judging acts of God. Van Gemeren (1991:825) very aptly states that whenever Israel suffered, the history of redemption continued.

Our three references in the prophet are all found in Deutero-Isaiah. In Isaiah 51 God had given wonderful promises to his people through the prophet, who now urges God to fulfill them. God promised that they will see new revelations of his mighty power in verse 5. The prophet daringly summons God's arm to put on strength (Knight 1984:154). The *arm of Yahweh* is further identified with the drying up of the sea and the provision of a way for crossing the Reed Sea (Watts 1987:211). Whybray (1990:158) comments that Yahweh's arm speaks of his capacity as warrior. God's mighty power had already been witnessed in the destruction of Egypt's power (vv.10-11). The power that brought deliverance through great miraculous displays will again be the confidence of God's people for his new saving action, when they will again enter their land with joy; this time from Babylonia. Oswalt (2003:215) is right in saying that none of the powers of evil in the world can stop Israel's redeemer.

The verses just prior to the fourth Servant Song (52:13 - 53:12) speak again of the act of salvation as powerful as the deliverance from Egypt, and with the arm spoken of in chapter 51. Unlike the flight from Egypt, the flight from Babylonia will not be as pressured (Grogan 1986:297). Just as at the exodus, God would protect the procession from both the front and the rear. In this use of the exodus theme (v.12) there is a promise of an exodus more wonderful than that from Egypt (Herbert 1975:106). Hanson (1995:146) puts it beautifully: God will act as God acted in creation and the exodus. God's power is sufficient to defeat the pernicious forces of chaos.

In a text of lament, Isaiah 63:11-14, the prophet calls to mind the past deeds of God for his people and complains that God is slow to provide deliverance. Again, as in Isaiah 51 and 52, mention is made of the arm of Yahweh. The focus of attention is still the events of the exodus and of divine power. God was their shepherd leading the people as a flock. Their unhindered passage through the sea, compared with the freedom of horses in an open country, was a great miraculous act of God. This remembered past was a time characterized by God's presence in the midst of the people, saving them from the dangers that engulfed them. The present in contrast is a time of God's absence (Hanson 1995:237). The cynics are asking if the arm of God was now too short to save. Was his ear too dull to hear their cry? Webb (1996:242) reminds us that the Exodus deliverance established a father-child relationship between God and the Israelites. Will he now see their distress and lift them up in their weakness? Yes, he will. In all their suffering he also suffered (v.9). They were his people and he was grieved by their misery (Walker 2005:272). As he has saved in the past, so he will save again.

God's goodness should inspire gratitude in the people of God. Instead, they were only expressing ingratitude by their apostate behavior, forgetfulness and lack of faith. In order to show the nation how far the people had departed from the Lord, Jeremiah (2:1-8) reminds them of the time of their deliverance from Egypt (Thompson 1980:168). Israel's devotion and faithfulness to her God has dwindled and she acts like an adulteress; as though she does not belong to him. Even the priests, who should enjoy the first-fruits of the harvests, did not enquire after the Lord. Feinberg (1986:388) correctly asserts that to be thoughtless is to be thankless. They did not appreciate the multiplicity of benefits they enjoyed at God's hand, nor were they mindful of his presence in their midst. God proved himself to be faithful in their past deliverance when as a young bride she followed him in the wilderness (Ryken 2001:38; Huey 1993:62). God had passion for his bride; he protected her all the way.

Jeremiah gives oracles of deliverance (Craigie 1991:333). The promise of a future salvation and settlement in their land is one that is patterned according to Israel's deliverance from Egypt (Jer.23:7-8). The people's confession of their paradigmatic

liberation will also provide them with bold hope of God's future acts of deliverance from Assyria and Babylon, the countries of the north. Their repatriation will rival the fame of the exodus from Egypt and will also be provided with good and God-honoring shepherds to lead the people (Guest 1988:244). Dearman (2002:264) puts it that something new and wonderful will emerge from David's line in this second exodus. Martens (2005:415) sums it up: "Beyond the Exile, God would take the initiative, as he did at the Exodus, to reverse a bad situation ... the themes of re-gathering, resettlement, repopulation, prosperity, new leadership and security ... so striking will be the undoing of the Exile that the Exodus will pale by comparison (23:7-8)."

As a diligent student of Scripture, Daniel 9:1-19 calls to mind Jeremiah's word and the Exodus event. Porteous (1979:136) admits that this text gives very clear expression to the faith by which Israel appropriated the mercy of God. The Exile and the Exodus are juxtaposed to demonstrate both God's justice and God's goodness. As the people of God, we accept responsibility for our actions and neglects. We are not fatalistic. We recognize that God, in response to our acts, was being just (Goldingay 1989:265). Daniel appeals to God's pity on the exiled nation and her ruined city of Jerusalem. He based his appeal wholly on God's own honor and glory (Archer 1985:110). God's reputation came a long way; since the deliverance from Egypt and Daniel's plea is for God to uphold his great reputation before the nations by being merciful to them. Le Roux (1995:110) gives fine expression to the people's dependency upon God: "In hierdie ellende, diep bewus van hulle skuld en met die resultate van God se regverdige straf duidelik voor oë, kan hulle opnuut soek na God se barmhartigheid "(vv.15-20).

Hosea introduces a moving contrast between God's steadfast love and Israel's persistent apostasy (Wood 1985:212). The prophet here in 11:1-5 begins to talk about Israel's restoration. Israel's earlier history recalls the relationship between them and God. He was their caring father, and they his chosen son, called out of Egypt. It was the event of the exodus that first made Israel conscious of his sonship (McKeating 1971:137). Boice (1983:88) reminds us that Israel was a son, not by birth, but by an adoption based on election. Israel in its childhood was

already set apart for the world's ultimate blessing (Kidner 1981:101). Instead, they despised their calling and followed the Baals. The rhetorical question in verse 5 implies an answer in the affirmative; they will return to bondage because of their apostasy and obduracy. Theirs was then redemption unto adoption and election for the purpose of showing God's kindness.

Amos narrates the immanence of God in Israel's history (McComiskey 1985a:305). God's interventions cannot be missed or overlooked. Sometimes God responded in judgments to alert Israel of her sins, yet they did not return to him. Contrary to Hayes (1988:147), who sees no reference to Exodus 7, we believe the reference to the plagues sent upon Egypt (v.10) is raised as an indictment against Israel's hard-heartedness; similar to that of Pharaoh back then. As Pharaoh was contrary to God and life, so now they demonstrated their contrariness in their refusal to return to God. Here Amos is setting out plainly his doctrine of discipline; that it is intended to be remedial in nature (McKeating 1971:36). It is meant to turn men back to God. This intention is expressed when they are exhorted to prepare themselves to meet their God (v.12).

Finally, in Micah 6 the Lord makes his appeal to Israel. He desires them to live in love, humility and justice towards their God. He has proven himself to be good and righteous towards them; he redeemed them from Egypt, the land of slavery, and gave them credible leaders such as Moses. In this act God demonstrated his saving love for his people. McComiskey (1985b:435) speaks of the prophet's "Theology of History". They, however, can offer nothing, especially if what they offered resembled that which was offered to idols. Waltke (1988:194) asks, "How could Israel think that costly sacrifices would buy her deliverance from the Assyrians when God had so freely delivered her from the Egyptians?" God wants them to walk with him. That was the kind of relationship that existed during their wilderness sojourn when he led them. God's love was not bought.

The New Testament has numerous references and allusions to our current text. Hebrews 11:22 alludes to Exodus 13:19 where Moses took Joseph's bones with them. Joseph made the Israelites promise that they would take his bones back to

the Promised Land. The writer to the Hebrews emphasizes the faith of Joseph in a coming exodus from Egypt. This faith may have rested on the word that God gave Abram in Genesis 15:13. Guthrie (1990:238) comments that Joseph cherished the promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and signified his confidence (Gen.50:24ff). The dominant idea of the text is that of a triumphant deliverance at the hand of God. Hagner (1990:197) says that Joseph had faith in the faithfulness of God, and hence his confidence in the coming exodus so that he gave instructions concerning his bones. Nevertheless, faith characterizes the demeanor of God's people.

In 1 Corinthians 10:1 Paul alludes to Exodus 13:21-22. He uses it as an admonition for the believers to remain holy in their actions. He refers to the fact that all the people, every one of them, were privileged to be led by the cloud through the sea to receive the new existence of freedom and God's provision, but not all of them entered the Promised Land because of their unholy actions. Ungodliness among God's people is displeasing to God and unbecoming for the redeemed. The means of grace must not be contaminated by an ungodly life. Clark (1975:151) comments that Paul warns against laxity, for laxity ruined most of the people with Moses. Dunn has this to say about this Corinthian verse:

The implications of all ill health or even death could be a consequence of "unworthy" eating and drinking (11:27-30) was particularly sobering and increased the solemnity of the sacramental occasion. On the other hand, it has been equally argued that the sin primarily condemned in 11:29 was failure to recognize the character not so much of the bread as the body of Christ, as the church as the body of Christ; proper discernment of the body in this sense is what would have prevented people acting independently of one another and without concern for other members of the body. (1997:76).

In Romans 9:18 Paul alludes to Exodus 14:4, 17. He demonstrates that in his election and in bringing to fulfillment his purpose, God is absolutely sovereign. Though the intention of God is the salvation of the whole world, his provision of that salvation will come in a particular way, and by the instruments he has chosen. He does this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy (Rom.9:23). Every one, nevertheless, gets what they deserve. Pharaoh had himself also hardened his heart in his reaction to what God has done. Morris says that God's hardening follows on what Pharaoh himself did. His hardening always

presupposes sin and is always part of the punishment of sin (1988:361). God was not unrighteous in his dealings with Pharaoh because he gave him many opportunities to repent and believe (Wiersbe 1977:105).

In Acts 7:36 Stephen makes reference to Exodus 14:21. He reminded his people that though the Israelites rejected Moses, he became the one whom God chose and through whom God saved the Israelites with many miraculous signs. The point of Stephen's speech was to show that Jesus, though rejected by the Jews, is chosen by God to be the savior of his people (Kebble 2000:98). Stephen thinks of the salvation provided by Jesus as a "second exodus" available to all who believe. He, Jesus, is indeed approved by God as Moses was approved of God.

In Hebrews 11:29 the writer alludes to Exodus 14:21-31. The writer contrasts the Israelites with the Egyptians. Hagner (1990:201) comments that they had the same kind of faith as Moses, following, also, the example of their leader. The Israelites had faith, while the Egyptians did not. Faith in Yahweh identifies the redeemed people, and those who are lost have no faith in God. Israel walked through on dry ground, but Egypt drowned though they tried to walk through. They were unable to do so without faith in Yahweh. Redemption, therefore, can only come by faith in God. Guthrie reminds us that the writer to the Hebrews here turns from individual faith to national faith (1990:241). Corporate faith and unbelief is in view here.

Matthew 2:15 indirectly alludes to the exodus narrative. It alludes directly to Hosea 11:1 where the prophet says: *When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.* The prophet Hosea, however, refers to the exodus event. Israel was in its infancy as a nation. The redemption made them into an independent nation on the way to their land. Barclay (1975:37) admits that Hosea had nothing to do with Jesus, and nothing to do with his flight to Egypt, and that Matthew was typically using Old Testament passages with a verbal fit as a prophecy about Jesus. It was his method of appeal to his readers. Yet, as with Israel, Jesus Christ is presented as the one whom God calls from Egypt to provide light and salvation for the whole world.

Childs (1974:233) comments that in Revelation 15:2f John alludes to our current text in Exodus. He sees plagues of God's wrath as having been poured out. Next, he sees a sea mixed with fire. Standing beside the sea were those who had been victorious over the beast and that which represents him. They sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb. Uppermost in mind is the heavenly analogue to the Red Sea in connection with the new exodus ... the exodus atmosphere is also discernible in the "plagues" modeled after the plagues of Egypt (Beale 1999:789). The plagues bring to mind those that culminated in the Passover in Egypt. The sea mixed with fire brings to mind the Red Sea with the pillar of fire. The beast and all that represents him reminds us about Pharaoh. Those standing victorious beside the sea remind us about the Israelites. The song of Moses and the song of the Lamb bring together the parallel event of deliverance (from Pharaoh and from the Beast). This apocalyptic text points to the Christian eschatological hope in Jesus Christ.

2D. PREPARATION FOR GOD'S COVENANTING PRESENCE.

Israel saw the mighty hand of God in action. They must have been awe-inspired and confident that the God who redeemed them was certainly able to lead them to the land he had promised them. Their redemption was brought about with many miracles, by a God who showed them that he was for them. The Egyptians now knew that Yahweh was God, and Israel knew it too.

We now begin the account of God's revelation at Mount Sinai. There are scholars who do not accept Sinai as a natural part of the whole nation's history. Le Roux (1983:105-113) identifies one such scholar as Gerhard Von Rad, who, because of the consistent lack of Sinai's mention in the credo (Dt.6:20-24; 26:5-9 and Jos.24:2-13), comes to the conclusion that the exodus and Sinai were two distinct events in which two separate groups of previously unconnected people participated. These different tribes, who came from different places and entering the Promised Land at different times, only became a united group in Palestine. The exodus and Sinai were therefore separate events, and the Sinai tradition originated with one of these tribes. Von Rad makes two unsubstantiated claims: firstly, taking the credo as a priority statement around which the Hexateuch was constructed, and secondly, the possibility of reading the credo itself too narrowly; especially, since the credo is couched in a context that encourages obedience to the Law, which Deuteronomy always connects with Sinai.

Three main elements become apparent at Sinai, namely, a theophany, the making of a covenant, and the revelation of laws and instructions for worship. Clements (1972:110) comments that Mount Sinai, and the knowledge of the covenant made there between God and Israel, have clearly served as central points of anchorage for all the main traditions governing Israel's life and worship. The Sinai covenant may be compared to a national constitution which may have undergone expansion and amendment in the course of history, but which has remained true to its original intention.

It is not always taken for granted that law and narrative was written together. Fretheim (1991:201-207), for instance, says that law and narrative were passed down separately for years, and have later been integrated into the story. He admits that the integration in Exodus is unique among ancient Near Eastern literature. This can be challenged, because God is the subject of both the law and the narrative. The giver of the law interacted personally with those who received it. There was a prior connection between the giver and the receivers; God redeemed them, and therefore they were expected to respond in obedient gratitude. The narrative actually places the law into proper perspective and explains its rationale with respect to the character of the God who stands behind it. The law is not an imposition from God that is unrelated to Israel's particular history or to common experience regarding what is in the best interests of true life. The law cannot be grasped without the narrative, and the narrative is incomplete without the law. The law is not an abstract ethical imposition, which would have been watered down to mere legalistic terms. The narrative shows that the true context of the law is really the very fabric of life in its living. We agree with Fretheim when he says that the integration of law and narrative becomes a form of witness to God and to what God has done. Narrative shaped the people's identity and provided a pattern for the life of faith (1991:207).

On the issue of the layers and compilations, we cannot talk of the so-called disruptive form of Exodus in our text. Diachronic scholars are themselves very tentative in this regard. This is so because after almost a century of close critical work, many of the problems have resisted a satisfactory solution (Childs 1974:344). Literary critics allocate our current text roughly as follows: 19:1-9 as J; 19:10-19 as P; 19:20-25 as J; and 20:1-21 as E. There is no general agreement here (cf. Childs 1972:345). The divine names are not a reliable guide to sources in the chapter. Traditio-historical critics also cannot agree on the recitation, reading, promise and covenant-making patterns. A purely cultic background to our text is untenable.

Together with Durham's (1987:259) admission (and even though he speaks of such layers and compilations), we take it that the final form of Exodus is in fact the

one sequence we know without speculation, and which reflects a coherent theological intention. The key to the Sinai narrative sequence lies in the theological purpose, not in its narrative-source or traditio-historical roots, which are open to much speculation. At the center of that theological purpose is the gift of Yahweh's Presence to Israel at Sinai. Without the narrative of that Presence, the motivation for keeping the law can hardly be found.

The Israelites became the treasured possession of Yahweh. They had to relate to him in a specific way. He called them to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. The relationship between God and Israel came by God's initiative. Up until this point, Israel could only refer to their history to demonstrate this relationship. Unless there was some way in which this relationship could be perpetuated on their part, the relationship would have been meaningless. Even then, however they may have attempted to perpetuate this relationship; it would have depended on whether such an attempt was valid and acceptable. Mendenhall's discovery of the Hittite covenant/treaty form has shown itself to be inadequate as a pattern for what we have here. Nevertheless chapter 19 remains as a witness that God did enter a covenant with a historical people at a particular time and place.

Their input had to be acceptable to the one they desired to have a relationship with. If God prescribed the way this relationship was to be perpetuated, then it may be assumed that there was agreement from his side. This agreement was indeed confirmed by the presence of God. Exodus is indeed the book of the presence of the Lord among his people. The Sinai pericope stands at the very center of the book of Exodus and as the pivotal point for Mosaic faith. From Sinai onwards, God dealt with Israel, nationally, according to the terms of the Sinaitic covenant (Pink 1981:153).

The meeting with God is the entry into "the holiness" for the purpose of worship. This act of worship implements the long-standing, oft-repeated demand of the liberation narrative: "Let my people go that they may worship me". There is a great deal of movement up and down the mountain. We may discover seven ascents of Moses into the Lord's presence on Mount Sinai. Command is rooted in theophany,

but obedience to the command must be an expression of worship as a response to the theophany. Israel's destiny under command is rooted in the self-disclosure of God who spoke the commands.

Our present text establishes the terms that God sets in place for this relationship. These are what would regulate the relationship that God wanted to have with his people. Yahweh would be their God and they would be his people. There is a covenant relationship between them. The Israelites were to obey all the commands of the Lord, their God. The God who has delivered is the God who commands. Their obedience would demonstrate their allegiance to the commands of Yahweh, and to the appointment of Moses as the authorized mediator.

Exodus 19:1 – 25.

1. Translation:

- 19.1** In the third month¹⁰¹, on the day, when the sons of Israel came out from the land of Egypt, they came to the Desert of Sinai.
- 2 They journeyed from Raphidim and came to the Desert of Sinai and they pitched in the desert, and Israel encamped there in front¹⁰² of the mountain.
- 3 And Moses went up to God. And Yahweh called him up on the mountain and said, “Thus you must say to the house of Jacob and tell the sons of Israel,
- 4 ‘You have seen what I have done to the Egyptians, and *how*¹⁰³ I have carried you on eagles’ wings, and have brought you in to myself.
- 5 And now, if you obey¹⁰⁴ my voice and keep my covenant, then you are to me a peculiar treasure among all the peoples. The whole earth is mine,
- 6 but you are to me a kingdom¹⁰⁵ of priests¹⁰⁶ and a holy nation.’ These are the words you are to speak to the sons of Israel.”

¹⁰¹ Properly means “new moon” determined by observation and proclamation by blowing trumpets; a lunar month. (HGK:2544; BDB:294.1; Gesenius:p263)

¹⁰² Can be translated “before” or literally, “in the face of”, which could also mean “in the presence of”.

¹⁰³ Added

¹⁰⁴ With the infinitive and imperfect of the verb, it literally says, “... if to obey you obeyed ...”

¹⁰⁵ Out of the 117 occurrences of this word, it is translated 110 times as “kingdom” in the AV. (Strong’s:4467)

¹⁰⁶ In almost all instances, this word is so translated from the Hebrew (744 out of 750 occurrences). (Strong’s:3548)

- 7 So Moses came and called the Elders of the people; and he put before¹⁰⁷ them all these words which Yahweh commanded him to give.
- 8 And all the people answered together and said, “All which Yahweh has spoken, we will do.” And Moses brought back to Yahweh the words of the people.
- 9 And Yahweh said to Moses, “Behold, I am coming to you in the¹⁰⁸ thick cloud, so that the people may hear when I speak to you, and so always believe you when you tell them the words of Yahweh.
- 10 And Yahweh said to Moses, “Go to the people and consecrate¹⁰⁹ them today and tomorrow, and have them wash their garments”.
- 11 So they were preparing for the third day, because on the third day Yahweh would come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people.
- 12 “You are to put limits for the people on every side, and say, ‘Beware all, do *not*¹¹⁰ go up on the mountain or touch its border; whoever touches the mountain will surely be put to death.
- 13 Not a hand shall touch him¹¹¹, because he shall surely be stoned to death, or shot through; whether beast or man, he shall not live. After a long blast of the ram’s horn can they come to the mountain”.
- 14 And Moses went down from the mountain to the people and consecrated them. And the people washed their garments.
- 15 And he said to the people, “Be prepared for the third day, and do not come near¹¹² a woman”.
- 16 On the morning of the third day there were sounds of thunder and lightning flashes, a thick cloud was heavy over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet sound. All the people in the camp trembled.
- 17 And Moses brought the people out from the camp to meet God, and they stationed¹¹³ themselves at the foot of the mountain.
- 18 And Mount Sinai was covered with smoke. While the presence of Yahweh descended on it in fire – it smoked up like the smoking of a furnace, and the whole mountain trembled violently.
- 19 And there was the increasing sound of a trumpet which became very loud. Moses spoke and God answered him with a voice¹¹⁴.
- 20 And Yahweh came down on Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain. And Yahweh called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up.
- 21 And Yahweh said to Moses, “Go down and warn the people to keep them from breaking¹¹⁵ through to Yahweh, to gaze *at him*¹¹⁶ and many of them perish¹¹⁷.”

¹⁰⁷ Literally, “to the face of them”

¹⁰⁸ Some translations use the indefinite article here. (e.g. NIV)

¹⁰⁹ In the majority of instances, the word “sanctify” is used. It nevertheless has the idea of dedication. (Strong’s:6942; BDB:871.1; HGK:7726)

¹¹⁰ Implied

¹¹¹ It cannot be said for sure whether this refers to the slain person or to the mountain, as the mountain is also referred to in the masculine in the previous verse.

¹¹² It means not to have sexual relations.

¹¹³ The Hithpael form of the verb can also imply the idea of presenting themselves in the presence of God. (Strong’s:3370; HGK:3656)

¹¹⁴ The voice could have sounded like thunder, as the word used can also be translated “thunder”; cf. Ex.9:23. (Strong’s:6963; BDB:876.2)

¹¹⁵ The connotation here is that of forcefully breaking through. (HGK:2238; Genesisius:p232)

- 22 And the priests, who draw near to Yahweh, must consecrate themselves lest Yahweh breaks out against¹¹⁸ them”.
- 23 And Moses said to Yahweh, “The people cannot ascend Mount Sinai because you have charged us and said that we must set boundaries around the mountain, for you have sanctified it”.
- 24 And Yahweh said to him, “Go down and bring with you Aaron and the priests. But the people must not break through to come to Yahweh, lest he breaks out against them”.
- 25 So Moses went down to the people and spoke to them.

2. Exegesis.

It had been three months since the Israelites left the land of Egypt. They left Rephidim and travelled through the Desert of Sinai until they came to the mountain. It was named Mount Sinai. Deuteronomy prefers to call it Mount Horeb. It was otherwise also known as the “mountain of God”. It was called the mountain of God because it was there where Moses met with Yahweh, and where he received his call and commissioning to go to his people. This very mountain was to be the sign to Moses that it was really Yahweh who sent him to rescue the people from Egypt (Ex.3:12).

Moses’ first three ascents were introductory to the establishment of the covenant. The first ascent calls Israel to obedience. They were to respond in obedience to the laws that were to be given, and which were to establish the covenant between them and God. The second ascent calls the people to holiness, which was to characterize their future existence within the covenant relationship. In the third ascent Moses is faced with the seriousness of this holiness, and that it was to be an expression of the people’s identity and testimony in the world.

At this mountain Yahweh was confirmed to be a saving God. He alone was God, sovereign over all the gods of the nations. He has defeated the gods of the Egyptians, and would prove himself to be over all the gods and that he alone was

¹¹⁶ Added

¹¹⁷ The perfect tense gives it a sense of finality.

¹¹⁸ This is a way of saying that Yahweh will destroy them.

God in the world. He was for the sons of Israel. He was their God and they were his people. This relationship was to be confirmed here at this mountain with a covenant which Yahweh made with the children of Israel. They were to fear the Lord.

At this mountain the children of Israel were to be confirmed as the people of God. The Lord came down on the mountain in the sight of the people. He descended on it in fire. They heard God speak. They heard the ever-louder trumpet sound with every appearance of Yahweh. They were to be a consecrated people. They entered into a covenant relationship with Yahweh. They pledged themselves there to serve Yahweh faithfully, and to be different to all the nations around them. They pledged themselves to the intentioned position that Yahweh had for them, namely as a kingdom of priests unto Yahweh.

At this mountain they were to receive the Law of God. That “God spoke all these words” was a unique feature of the Decalogue and of the Book of the Covenant. Their relationship to Yahweh was regulated by this Law, and by it they were to be identified uniquely as Yahweh’s possession. This apodictic law was unique to Israel and provided true Israelite law. The Decalogue was rooted in the institutional life of Israel. The commandments were tied inextricably to God’s revelation at Sinai and were used in the sealing of the Covenant between Yahweh and his people.

At this mountain the people experienced the presence of God most demonstrably. They saw the demonstrations of God’s presence; the mountain shook at the voice of God. Both the people and animals could not even touch the foot of the mountain, else they would die. The mountain was covered with a cloud and fire when God presented himself. The presence of Yahweh is that which distinguished the Israelites. That Yahweh was present with them was indicative of his favor upon them.

At his mountain Moses was to be confirmed as God’s man. He spoke to God as a man spoke to his friend; face to face. Moses frequently met with God on this mountain. Moses alone could go into the presence of God to speak with him.

Moses was mediator between Yahweh and the people. Moses told the Israelites the words of Yahweh. In fact the Israelites preferred Moses to speak to them rather than Yahweh himself. The people were to be at a distance from Yahweh, but Moses entered the thick darkness of his presence.

2.1 Genré.

This whole pericope may be classified as *narrative*; and in particular *saga*. It is the story about the Israelites at Mount Sinai. The whole narrative is written mainly in prose form. Quoting Cassuto (1967) is appropriate here: "... as befits a passage treating of so exalted a subject, the diction rises above the level of prose, and even assumes, at times, poetic aspects in its form, qualities and poetic rhythm." This narrative includes anecdote, reporting, instruction and apodictic law.

Ex. 19:1-2 is narrative in *anecdotal* form. It sets the scene for what is to follow. It recounts the details about the arrival at Mount Sinai. Ex. 19:3-8 is a *report* that relates the conversation between Yahweh and Moses. He was commanded to relate to the people what Yahweh said. Ex. 19:9-15 is a narrative that relates Yahweh's *instructions* to Moses and the people. Ex. 19:16-25 is a *report* of Moses' execution of God's instructions and the happenings at Mount Sinai before Moses receives the Ten Words of Yahweh. We agree with Cassuto that the whole chapter can be explained simply as a single sequence and that there is no reason to regard it as a collection of fragments derived from various sources (1967:235).

Moses is confirmed as the mediator approved of God. In fact, it is here where Moses becomes the model of Israelite and Jewish identity (Bosman 2007:326-333). Quoting Albright and Bright, Bosman remarks that Moses as a historical figure in biblical tradition is strongly supported by historical analogy, and is now being confirmed by a rapidly increasing mass of evidence uncovered by archeologists and philologists. The events of the exodus and Sinai require a personality behind them. To deny that role of Moses would force us to posit another person of the same name (2007:327). A more recent statement came from

Hoffmeier, who says: “I have shown that the biblical description of the entry into Egypt, the enslavement and the exodus are all plausible. I have also shown that several geographical sites on the exodus route are attested in Egyptian records of the New Kingdom” (2007:41). Bosman states what Hoffmeier concludes; that although Moses is not mentioned by name, the “minimalist” presupposition that all *realia* reflected in Exodus presuppose the 7th to the 6th Century BCE should not be accepted for granted (2007:327). There is no reason why the historicity of Moses as a person should be doubted as is done by some critical scholars.

2.2 Structural Considerations.

There is no doubt about the difficulty of analyzing the literary and tradition-historical aspects of our text. This is so because there is little agreement among literary critical scholars; the allocation to documentary sources is particularly difficult with the nineteenth chapter of Exodus. According to Childs (1974:344ff.) the level of comprehensive agreement eluded scholars like Wellhausen, Bächtzli, Kuenen, Gressmann, McNeile, Driver and Rudolph. The various linguistic and conceptual criteria in analyzing the sources are rather precarious, and the literary critics were basically mistaken in denying the lack of unity to chapter 19. The divine names are not a reliable guide to sources in this text.

Scholars speak about the detachability and the expansion/contraction of the “ground-text”. There have been so many expansions, contractions and redactions it is said that it has become an impossibility to establish the various layers of the text. Both the literary- and form-critical schools provide no answers for us. Frankly, neither do the traditional critical scholars provide any definite identification of the so-called layering of the different traditions. Whatever is presented amounts to nothing more than speculation.

Our concern is not to try and “unravel” all of this. Instead, we have already said that our concern is the synchronic rather than the diachronic consideration of the text. Durham (1987:259) is correct when he admits that the final form of the Book of

Exodus and its sequence is the only one we can know without speculation, because its compilation was based on a coherent theological intention. The key to the Sinai narrative sequence lies in its theological purpose, not in its narrative-source or tradition-historical roots. The form of the entire Sinai narrative sequence is determined by the single factor of the gift of Yahweh's Presence to Israel.

The connection between the theophany and the giving of the law was highly problematic. Another question concerns the connection of the text to the patterns of covenant-making. While we may identify a Hittite form in the covenant-making in our text, the Hittite parallels to the covenant form did not answer the question of connection between theophany and law. Also, there was also no parallel to the covenant mediator of chapter 19 in that particular treaty pattern.

The theophany, however, was purposed also to legitimate Moses, the covenant mediator, in the eyes of the Israelites (Ex. 19:9). Moses' function was to lead the people out to meet God in order to conclude the covenant (Ex19:12). These were the two forms of Mosaic office which were to be reflected throughout the Sinai pericope. The people's request, that Moses should be their mediator rather than that God should speak to them directly, came *after* (Ex.20:18ff.) the receiving of the Decalogue.

God first appeared in a theophany (chp.19), pronounced the Decalogue to all the people (Ex.20:1-17), established Moses as mediator because of the people's fear (Ex. 20:18-21), and finally delivered the remaining laws of the Book of the Covenant to Moses for the people (Ex. 20:22-24:18). The appearance in the theophany was necessary for the formal aspects of covenant-making, at least until Moses was established as the covenant mediator. Both parties had to be represented in the covenant-making process.

2.2.1. Text outline.

- a. 19:1-2 Israel's Arrival at Sinai
- b. 19:3-8a The Covenant Announced
 - i) Conditions of the Covenant (3-6)
 - ii) Israel's Acceptance (7-8a)
- c. 19:8b-9 Announcing the Coming Theophany
- d. 19:10-13 Instructions for Consecration
 - i) Consecration for the Coming Theophany (10-11)
 - ii) Limiting the People (12-13a)
 - iii) Signal for Approach (13b)
- e. 19:14-15 Consecration of the People
- f. 19:16-19 Anticipating the Theophany
 - i) Signs of the Coming Theophany (16)
 - ii) Going to Meet God (17)
 - iii) Trembling Mountain and Blasting Trumpet (18-19)
- g. 19:20-25 The Present God
 - i) God Calls Moses Up (20)
 - ii) Instructions for the People (21-24)
 - iii) Moses' Descent (25)

2.2.2 Linguistic, Grammatical and Rhetorical Characteristics.

2.2.2.1 Important Recurring Verbs (by stem)

<i>Stem</i>	<i>Meaning</i>	<i>Occurrences</i>	<i>Verse</i>	<i>Translated as</i>
שָׁמַר	keep	2	19:5 19:12	<i>and keep</i> <i>do not</i>
שָׁמַע	hear	3	19:5 19:9	<i>(to obey) you obey</i> <i>hear</i>
קָרָא	call	4	19:3 19:7 19:17 19:20	<i>called</i> <i>called</i> <i>meet</i> <i>called</i>
נָשָׂא	lift up	1	19:4	<i>carried</i>
נָגַד	tell	3	19:2 19:3 19:9	<i>in front of</i> <i>tell</i> <i>tell</i>
עָנָה	answer	2	19:8 19:19	<i>answered</i> <i>answered</i>
קִדְּשׁ	consecrate	4	19:10 19:14 19:22 19:23	<i>consecrate</i> <i>consecrated</i> <i>consecrate</i> <i>sanctified</i>
יָרַד	descend	7	19:11 19:14 19:18 19:20 19:21 19:24 19:25	<i>come down</i> <i>went down</i> <i>descended</i> <i>came down</i> <i>go down</i> <i>go down</i> <i>went down</i>
נָגַע	touch	3	19:12 19:12 19:13	<i>touch</i> <i>touches</i> <i>touch</i>

<i>Stem</i>	<i>Meaning</i>	<i>Occurrences</i>	<i>Verse</i>	<i>Translated as</i>
מות	die / kill	2	19:12 (2x)	<i>surely be put to death</i>
עשן	smoke	3	19:18 19:18 19:18	<i>covered with smoke</i> <i>smoked up</i> <i>smoking</i>
נגש	come near	2	19:15 19:22	<i>come near</i> <i>draw near</i>
כון	form / establish	2	19:11 19:15	<i>preparing</i> <i>prepared</i>
גבל	set up a boundary	2	19:12 19:23	<i>to put limits</i> <i>set boundaries</i>
כבס	launder / wash	2	19:10 19:14	<i>wash</i> <i>washed</i>
חרד	tremble / be afraid	2	19:16 19:18	<i>trembled</i> <i>trembled</i>
עוד	bind / charge	2	19:21 19:23	<i>to keep</i> <i>charged</i>
הרס	destroy	2	19:21 19:24	<i>perish</i> <i>breaks out against</i>
פרץ	break down	2	19:22 19:24	<i>breaks</i> <i>break through</i>
כבד	be heavy	1	19:16	<i>was heavy</i>

2.2.2.2 Important Recurring Nouns (by stem)

<i>Stem</i>	<i>Meaning</i>	<i>Occurrences</i>	<i>Verse</i>	<i>Translated as</i>
שְׁלִישִׁי	third	3	19:1 19:11 19:16	<i>third</i> month <i>third</i> day <i>third</i> day
יהוה	Yahweh	26	Various	<i>Yahweh</i>
סִינַי	Sinai	6	Various	<i>Sinai</i>
הַר	mountain	17	Various	<i>mountain / Mount</i>
קוֹל	sound / voice	5	19:5 19:16 19:16 19:19 19:19	<i>voice</i> <i>sounds</i> <i>sound</i> <i>sound</i> <i>voice</i>
כֹּהֵן	priest	3	19:6 19:22 19:24	<i>priests</i> (kingly) <i>priests</i> <i>priests</i>
מֹשֶׁה	Moses	17	Various	<i>Moses</i>
שׁוֹפָר	trumpet	2	19:16 19:19	<i>trumpet</i> <i>trumpet</i>

2.2.2.3. Observable Thematic Progression.

19:1	third month			
3		called		
5		voice	obey	
			obey	
			keep	
6			priests	
7		called		
9			hear	
10		consecrate		
		wash		
11	come down			
	third day			
12				(don't) touch
				touches
				put limits
13				(don't) touch
14	went down	consecrated		
		washed		
15				don't come near
16	third day	sounds		trembled
		sound		
		trumpet		
17		meet		
18	descended		smoke	trembled
			smoked up	
			smoking	
19		sound		
		voice		
		trumpet		
20	came down	called		
21	go down			
22		consecrate	priests	draw near
23		sanctified		set boundaries
24	go down		priests	
25	went down			

With the frequency of occurrence it becomes apparent that Yahweh and Moses are the central characters in this narrative. That they are located at the central place, Mount Sinai, is emphasized. There is now no doubt that it was Yahweh who redeemed his people, for it was confirmed when they got to this mountain. It was here that they will worship Yahweh (Ex.3:12).

It is also very apparent that there was much shaking and noise. The people trembled. The mountain trembled. Thundering, lightning, loud sounds and prolonged trumpet blasts filled the atmosphere. The calling and the voice of God are prevalent throughout our text, and have caused all these portents. They were an indication of Yahweh's personal Presence with the Israelites. God descended to the top of the mountain; which is also understood as its "source" or "head" (an appropriate understanding for the place where God comes to). When Moses descended, he came with the word of Yahweh to the people of Yahweh. The leaders were given the privilege to ascend and experience God's presence on behalf of the people.

The smoke veiled the Presence of Yahweh for the benefit of the people. The mountain was cordoned off as it became holy because of the Presence. There were limits to men's drawing near to God. The people were to be consecrated and "washed" before they could enter the proximity of Yahweh's holiness, and they were to be careful in what they touched.

The principles of the Law were that which Yahweh's people were to obey and uphold. With these they were to relate well with both God and man. Keeping the Law gave the nation an opportunity to live out creation principles within the spheres of religion and society. While in the religious cultic aspect there was place for communal expression, the Decalogue needed first to be expressed by the individual within the community.

2.3 Commentary.

The Sinai narrative in Ex. 19-20 not only is a very specific datum within Old Testament writings, but also appears to be remarkably isolated with respect to considerable parts of the literature. So says Booij (1984:1) as he traces the importance of the mountain theophany in the Sinai narrative within the Old Testament and Israel's faith history. Indeed, theophany marks the identity of this

people in a most remarkable way. In general one can say that in Ex.19-20 the heart of the matter is not “serving” God, “feasting”, and “offering”, but rather God’s “descending” (19:11, 18) and imperative “speaking”, and the covenant between him and the people (Booij 1984:9). In this narrative we find the most sublime section in the book, supremely signifying a decisively important event in the history of Israel and of humanity as a whole.

Nürmberger (1999:20-61) also sees the Sinai narrative as the datum within Old Testament Scripture. He, however, does so to the exclusion of the emancipatory role of the exodus motif. The covenant-law tradition that identifies the Israelites as the people of God, is for him most fundamental. With the exclusion we cannot agree, but with Moses as the real mediator in that context, we do agree. If Moses was a fictitious figure, why did the composers of this tradition not make him lead Israel into the Promised Land? That he died just before Israel entered the country seems to point to an ancient historical memory.

The personal presence of Yahweh was perhaps the most vital. It was demonstrated by the theophany, giving authority to the communications that happened at the mountain. It also was meant to authenticate Moses as the man of God. God knew that his people would be inconsistent and gave them personal and public affirmation of his mediator, Moses (Murphy 1979:209). Moses’ mediation is further authenticated by the fact that he alone was able to come into the presence and commune with God. Nevertheless, the personal presence of God is evident throughout the process of covenant-making.

Not only does the Sinai pericope represent a coherent account of the theophany, but it shows the primacy of direct discourse over summary in biblical narrative. In this case, the speech of Yahweh and the people’s reply focus the reader’s attention upon the covenant. The narrative contains two different perspectives of the theophany (Chirichigno 1987:479). The first is the perspective of Yahweh which emphasizes the preparation, execution and holiness of God and the second is the perspective of the people which elaborates the resuming narrative in 20:18-21, where they accept Moses as their mediator.

The exodus liberation established the relationship between Yahweh and the Israelites. In fact, earlier already, God gave his name to the people (3:14), and by giving his name he gave himself. The relationship had a connection that even predated the giving of the name, as Yahweh's beneficial action was a response to the relationship that he had with the patriarchs. The giving of the name, however, was the preparation for recognizing the one who was to make a covenant with them in the future. Without the disclosure of the divine name, and thus without the proper recognition of the deity concerned, there could be no relationship established with this deity (Dumbrell 1984:82). His self-disclosure and self-identification, "I am Yahweh", would become central and necessary in the process of covenant-making.

The place was as important as the name; not that the covenant could not be established elsewhere, but that it had already been specified as the place where they would come to meet with God. The mountain known as "Sinai" and "Horeb" was also known as the "Mountain of God". This is the mountain towards which Yahweh and Moses were leading the people. The very mountain of Moses' commissioning was the place where they would meet God. Quoting Weisman, Booij (1984:11) remarks that the mountain of God is extra-territorial; it lies outside Egypt, first of all, and outside Midian, behind the wilderness; there outside human territory is a holy place.

Three months after having left Egypt the Israelites arrived at Mount Sinai. They were going to remain there for almost a year, and in this period the Covenant is proposed, they received the Law and they prepared the dwelling place of God, the sanctuary, for their journey to the Promised Land (Davis 1971:193). At the mountain they were actually united as a people, being constituted as a nation.

The self-disclosure of Yahweh, his liberating act, and this holy place created the scene for the covenant about to be ratified between himself and Israel. He was to be their God, and they were to be his special people. They were to be a people, who through their experience of his presence, were to be his representatives in the world and to the nations. Let us now look at the text in more detail.

a. Ex. 19:1-2 Israel's Arrival at Sinai.

These two verses provide a narrative setting of the time and place. Mount Sinai is very much in the focus at this stage of Israel's story. *In the third month* (חֹדֶשׁ *chodesh*) more properly means "the third new moon". It was the commencement of a new period of time in the life of nature. *On the day* specifies the exact time, emphasizing the beginning of the new moon. It was the first day of the month. Durham (1987:257) believes that the insertion of these words indicates Moses' eagerness to have Israel experience at Sinai the revelation of the Presence he had experienced there. According to Cassuto (1967:224) the mention of the third new moon is not unintentional as they were in their seventh week since the exodus, and that that formed a still higher significance as a Sabbath. For him the labour in Egypt reflected the six days of labour before the Sabbath. Whether this was the author's intention or not, does not matter; what matters is that *the sons of Israel came out of Egypt and came to the desert of Sinai*. The goal of the journey from Egypt has been reached.

The sequence of the geographic itinerary ties in with 17:1 and the description of their movement in Ex.18. *Israel encamped in front of Mount Sinai*. The words *in front* can also be translated as "in the presence". We cannot know the exact location of Mount Sinai. To propose the mountains on the east of the Gulf of Aqaba because there are volcanic peaks is to read into the text volcanic activity where there is mention only of theophanic portents. Cole (1973:143) is correct when he says that it is most unlikely that such a nomadic group could ever have been persuaded to remain so near a volcano in eruption. Be that as it may, any proposal of location is speculative. Mount Sinai is the mountain of God, where he chose to reveal himself to his people. The mountain is the place where earth touches heaven, where the human realm makes contact with the abode of God. The place thus is laden with holy presence. The mountain is made the context of what follows.

b. Ex. 19:3-8a The Covenant Announced.

Here we have a thematic announcement of covenant. The expected covenant obedience is rooted in the exodus, a theophany of the coming God, the ritual preparation for the coming that is expected, and the preliminary oath of allegiance to the coming God. This theophany will provide the context for the utterance of the Ten Commandments, a speech from the very mouth of God to the sons of Israel. The wording of 19:3 suggests that Moses began to ascend the mountain before he had heard the Lord calling him (Rylaarsdam 1952:204). Moses' first ascent centers on the call to Israel to be obedient. The concern of the chapter to single out Moses is of fundamental importance.

i) Conditions of the Covenant (3-6).

Moses went up to God before Yahweh called him up on the mountain. It reflects Moses' eagerness to bring Israel to where he had experienced the presence of God. Though we have not translated it thus, the verb *called* (קָרָא *Qowre*) does not only mean 'summoned', but 'spoke in a loud voice', as in the expression 'lifted up his voice and cried aloud'. Durham (1987:261) says that Yahweh is as eager for Moses and Israel to arrive at Sinai as they are to get there. In either case Moses' ascent precedes the call. It is to be believed that the call came as he was on his way up.

God called Moses in order to give him a message for the people. Notice the synonymous parallelism in the way the people are referred to. They are both *the house of Jacob* and *the sons of Israel*. According to Cassuto, this way of expression is commonly found in the poetic tradition of 'commissioning' (1967:226). The purpose of God's bringing Israel to the mountain is announced to Moses.

According to Le Roux (1983b:62-63), this double form is a late usage and is entirely absent from the older stories. Gen.46:27, Ps.114:1-2 and here are the only occurrences outside the prophetic literature. The problem is that Le Roux equates “house of Jacob” with “house of Judah” (of Ps 114 and the prophetic material of the divided kingdom) and on that basis ascribes the late date. The Exodus text does not have any reference to Judah and the assertion is therefore unnecessary. However, there can be no confusion about whom this message is for. Throughout this entire theophany and covenant-making ceremony on the mountain Moses plays an indispensable role as mediator between God and the people. He combines in one person the work of priest, prophet and national leader.

There is a set form which proceeds from the proclamation of God’s mighty deeds. Before Yahweh gives the conditions for the covenant, he calls Israel to remembrance about what he had done for their redemption. He has in fact dealt differently with the Egyptians than with his people. Their deliverance was Yahweh’s decisive victory against the Egyptians. The invitation to a covenant is predicated on the great divine acts of the past which Israel has herself experienced. Yahweh addresses the Israelites with three reminders, thereby identifying the parties to the covenant, namely “I” and “you”. Firstly, he tells them, *you have seen what I have done to the Egyptians*. The Israelites themselves are called as witnesses. They have seen for themselves how Yahweh acted against the Egyptians with devastating power.

Secondly, they have seen how he has *carried them on eagle’s wings*. Although the word נִשָּׂר (nē-šēr) applies to birds of prey in general, we have no doubt that here it refers to the eagle. Breuggemann comments that the goal of the exodus is presented as a flight from Pharaoh to Yahweh, from one master to a new one. The exodus required both power to override the grip of Egypt and nurturing to sustain when there was no other sustenance (1994:834). It encapsulates the exodus itself. This metaphor is also found in Deut.32:11-12 and is an image of the tender and protective care of Yahweh for the Israelites. It is a gracious image of God. God is one whose wings are always available for refuge, shelter and loving concern.

Thirdly, he reminds them that he brought them in to himself. Stuart (2006:422) notes that Yahweh not only brought them to his presence at Sinai, but he also brought them to enter into a covenant relationship with himself. This rescued people can be a community of ongoing covenant. Mackay (2001:326) succinctly states that as they have been travelling, they had repeatedly been made to realize their utter dependence on the Lord. Now at Sinai, they are removed from the corrupting environment of Egypt; they are living from day to day on the bounty of his provision; and they can focus on developing an intimate and obedient relationship with their benefactor.

Now the condition of any future relationship between Yahweh and Israel is stated. Fretheim notes that the matter is presented in personalistic terms: I did; I carried you; brought you to myself... (1991:210). While there is ample motivation, this relationship is conditional; it contains an *if/then* clause. *If you obey my voice and keep my covenant, then you are to me....* The word for *obey* (שָׁמַע *šā·mā*) is in the imperfect tense and has the effect of *is* or *will be obeying*. It speaks of Israel's required commitment to God himself. They must be heeding his voice. Obeying the voice of God entails more than obeying the laws given at Sinai. Much the same point can be made regarding the phrase "*and keep my covenant*". This is an open-ended commitment to Yahweh.

Then you are to me a peculiar treasure among all the peoples. Israel is God's own people, set apart from the rest of the nations. Israel is commissioned to be God's people on behalf of the earth which is God's. The way to be this kind of people is to keep covenant; to keep the covenant is to be this kind of people. They are a choice and valued treasure (סֵדְרָה *s^egūl·lā(h)*) belonging privately to the king from heaven, the creator of all. The Hebrew construction of the sentence highlights the personal sense of value to Yahweh (Janzen 1997:134). They hold a special position among the nations as the only nation with a covenant relationship with Yahweh. All the peoples are God's, and therefore he is the God of all the peoples. The Egyptians

already acknowledged that fact, and Israel must be instrumental in getting all the nations of the world to acknowledge it too.

The idea of being a peculiar treasure was reserved for Israel. How did the foreign resident or alien fit in? Here we refer to the non-Israelites who have joined themselves to the Israelites. Knauth (2003:26-33) tells us that they seemed not to have been full-member Israelites, with a lower status and dependant on a patron for protection. They were to be treated the same as an Israelite; on the basis of hospitality, with justice and equity, since the Israelites were themselves at one stage foreigners (in Egypt). Those “living within the gates” had to comply with many of the same rules as the Israelites, e.g. dietary (Ex.12:19), blasphemers were subject to death penalty, Sabbath rest (Ex.20:10), and religious festivals. Foreign wives were fully integrated. They were also excluded from certain obligations and privileges. So, while they were accepted in the community, we cannot conclude that those who were not foreign wives were part of the *peculiar treasure* referred to in our text.

Israel as a people is also dedicated to God’s service among the nations as priests function within a society. Israel was to become a kingdom like other nations, but, beyond this, it was also to enjoy a very close relationship to God, akin to that which a priest enjoyed within the community of worshipers which he served. In this way Israel was to be the priestly nation of the world, serving the nations by its service of God (Clements 1972:115). *And you are to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.* The “you” is emphatic, meaning “you alone”. To be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation represents the responsibility inherent in the original promise to Abraham; that he will be a blessing and that all the nations of the earth will be blessed through him, and ultimately fulfilled in Christ. In addition to the fact that the Israelites are a *prized possession*, they are also a *kingdom of priests* and a *holy nation*. These three images are closely related. The first speaks of a unique and exclusive possession and the other two expand and underscore that image. It must be said that Le Roux’s (1983b:73) assertion that גוי (goy) is an anachronism

admits to the rejection of the predictive element that is connected to the condition *if you obey*.

Kingdom of priests is unique in the Old Testament and has the interpretations of *kingdom of priests*, *kings who are priests* or *priest-like kings* (Durham 1987:262-3). If Israel is to be a servant nation rather than a ruling nation, then the two latter interpretations can be excluded. This is supported by the idea that these images (kingdom and priests) are true of Israel in relation to Yahweh.

While Israel themselves had no priesthood in place, we may be certain they were familiar with the concept from the surrounding ancient near eastern nations. They must have encountered heathen examples of priesthood. Besides, Jethro, Moses' father-in-law and a Midianite priest had contact with them to have exposed them to the concepts and functions of priesthood. In relation to Yahweh, they are his possession; they are his priests (in worship – “that they may worship me”); and they are a nation holy, separate from other nations and dedicated to him. In this way they are different from every other nation. That the whole earth is Yahweh's, speaks clearly to the biblical claim of monotheism and Israel's privilege to have been chosen as his special people.

It is perhaps appropriate to quote Mackay's (2001:329) profound remark:

One feature of the Exodus narrative that favors interpreting 'kingdom of priests' as referring to the priestly role of Israel as a whole is the ritual carried out in the covenant confirmation ceremony of 24:5-8 where the people were sprinkled with the blood of the sacrificed animals. It would be at this point that the role proposed for them in this verse would have been formally undertaken. Now the other passage where blood was ritually applied to persons under the Mosaic law was in the consecration of the priests (29:19-20). This suggests that the people as a whole were set apart in relation to this worldwide mission in the same way as Aaron and his sons were set apart to function as priests within the covenant community.

Finally, the life of Israel shall be commensurate with the holiness of the covenant God. Verses 5-6 show us that worship must inform and undergird obedience. The presence of God demonstrates God's initiative in both law and narrative, and which motivates a response of worship. The condition God places on Israel is the

condition of authentic hearing that leads to obedience to his voice (Hahn 2005:2). Hahn states further that obedience by Israel will be necessary for this covenant to achieve God's purpose of mutual relationship. This life of corporate obedience by the nation is the holiness to which they were called (2005:3).

ii) Israel's Acceptance (7-8a).

Moses had now to deliver this message to the people. *Moses came and called the Elders of the people.* It is obvious that Moses had to descend the mountain. The people were given the message through the Elders. Moses put before them *all the words which Yahweh commanded him to give.* Moses was a faithful messenger of Yahweh and *put before them all these words which Yahweh commanded him to give.* 'Put before' implies that they were to give careful consideration to these words.

We are not told that the Elders responded, but that the people did so. *All the people answered together.* With the words 'all' and 'together' we have no doubt that there was a corporate response. The people pledged themselves to obedience. They agreed to the conditions of the impending covenant, and answered similarly to the response later found in 24:3, 7: *all which Yahweh has spoken we will do.* The covenant invitation here in chapter 19 shows the same response as the covenant sealing in chapter 24. By that they pledged faithfulness to Yahweh, which went beyond obeying only the commands of Sinai. They have accepted Yahweh's invitation to be his people among the nations, carrying the knowledge of God throughout all the earth. The covenant responsibility encompassed Israel's whole life, defining her relationship to God and to her neighbors, and the quality of her existence (Childs 1974:367). They were a new kind of kingdom and a new kind of nation, one marked by priestly, holy marks.

c. Ex. 19:8b-9 Announcing the Coming Theophany.

Moses now plays the role of mediator and brings *back to Yahweh the words of the people*. Moses is a faithful mediator bringing only the words of the people as they responded saying: ‘all which Yahweh has spoken, we will do’. The people will obey the voice of Yahweh. They have promised to keep Yahweh’s covenant. Furthermore, they have accepted the role Yahweh has chosen for them; the role of being his peculiar treasure, and of being a kingdom of priests, and of being a holy nation among the nations of the world. The covenant is entered into voluntarily by Israel. We may assume that Moses ascended the mountain in order to report their response or reply to Yahweh. The word for *brought back* (וַיָּשֶׁבַח wayyāšēbh) is used in the sense of replied, for the proposal was in the nature of a question that required an answer (Cassuto 1967:228). This would have been Moses’ second ascent since their arrival at Mount Sinai.

Yahweh then spoke to Moses, making his first announcement of the coming theophany, which will also serve as an authentication of Moses as Yahweh’s spokesman to the people, as Yahweh enters into a covenant with them. Yahweh announced: *Behold, I am coming to you in the thick cloud*. The word *behold* (הִנֵּה hin-nē(h)) calls for Moses’ attention to what is being said. This is Yahweh’s stunning promise to come to them. While the ‘you’ is in the singular, we prefer to think that the promise was not to Moses alone, but to the people also, because they were instructed to make the necessary preparations for the coming. The preparations were obligations to each individual in the community. However, for Moses the Presence would be more intimate than for the people. Nevertheless, this promise of Presence is unconditional and immediate. Yahweh’s coming will be *in the thick cloud*. Whether our use of the definite article goes too far in alluding to a specific cloud or not, the essential truth is that Yahweh’s presence will be shrouded. It has to be because his presence can be destructive and dangerous. His holy presence cannot, and should not, be trivialized at any time.

This verse testifies that the mediatorship of Moses did not arise as an accidental afterthought, but was intended from the start (Childs 1974:368). Moses was appointed only because of Israel's fear. Durham's (1987:264) belief that this verse is a later addition because of the introduction of a 'new' theme of Moses' mediatory role is needless reasoning as he has already functioned in that way in this very context (v.8). Moses is the only link between God, whom no one can gaze upon, and the people, who have committed themselves to heed the commands of God. Motyer (2005:209) succinctly puts it:

In verse 9 *to you* is second person singular masculine, i.e. it refers to Moses, with the purpose of validating him as the mediator of the covenant (another 'anticipatory providence'), the Lord having known in advance how the people would react to the sound of his voice (20:18-19).

The coming in the thick cloud had a purpose in mind; *so that the people may hear when I speak to you, and so always believe you when you tell them the words of Yahweh*. The two-fold purpose was to authenticate Moses as God's spokesperson. The first intention within that purpose was for the people to *hear* God speak to Moses, and the second intention gives the real purpose, namely that the people *will always believe Moses when he tells them the words of Yahweh*. The first intention is the support for the second intention and also the real purpose of God's communicating presence. The people had to first believe in the reality of God's communication to Moses before they could believe the claims that God spoke to him. God will speak in such a public way to Moses in order to convince the people – now and forever – that Moses is a mediator of the word of God (Fretheim 1991:215). Lordship and revelation go together because lordship has no meaning without revelation. The Lord of Israel revealed himself to them.

d. Ex. 19:10-13 Instructions for Consecration.

The Lord not only said what he would do; he also instructed Moses and the people what to do and what not to do and the consequences to them if they disobeyed. Yahweh now instructs Moses to prepare the people for the theophany to come. The sons of Israel are now to put into practice the holiness that should depict their

character as a holy nation. The holy practice is a means of dedicating the people to God. Both Moses and the people have a responsibility in the task of sanctifying themselves and preparing themselves in the next two days to meet the Lord.

i) Consecration for the Coming Theophany (10-11).

Moses is to *go to the people and consecrate them* for that day and the next. The piel form of the verb, *consecrate* (קָדַשׁ *qā·dāš*), is a second person masculine singular with a third person masculine plural ending. Moses was expected to bring the people to a state of sacredness. The profound connection between the people and God who has laid claim upon them begins to emerge in the process of preparation. It also has the idea of dedication. Only what is holy can be dedicated to the Lord.

While we do not have more detail, it must be accepted that part of the process of consecration was to have the people *wash their garments*. Whether this meant that they should wash all their clothing (not expected to be more than two sets anyway) or just the set they would wear on the third day; we are not told. There is nevertheless an ambiguity, as one also wonders why God requires them to wash their clothes. Clothes-washing seems to have been an act that preceded a great and solemn happening (e.g. Gen.35:2 and Jos.3:5). Enns (2000:390), however, is correct; when he says we can only speculate. Perhaps washing clothes is analogous to Moses removing his shoes in God's presence in 3:5; they are to be in God's presence. Maybe it foreshadowed the priestly washing in the laver before they entered the Tabernacle. There is of course a connection between their calling to be a holy nation and the demand to purify them. They were nevertheless about to do what no other nation has ever done – to meet their heavenly king and hear his voice. Also, we can only speculate on the ease or difficulty of doing as they are commanded to do. The preparations are to qualify the people for the presence of God.

This was how *they were preparing for the third day, because on the third day Yahweh would come down upon Mount Sinai*. The fact that 'Yahweh' is in the third person is striking. Noth (1962:158) sees it as a possible explanatory gloss. We believe that the whole verse 11 is the author's comment. God was assumed normally to reside in the distant heavens, and the special sanctity of the mountain was established by his coming to it, or descending upon it, at particular times (Clements 1972:116). This did not preclude the possibility that God could make this mountain his 'abode'. Indeed, Mount Sinai was also known as the 'mountain of God'. What is important to notice is that God promises to come down *in the sight of all the people*. Each one will personally experience the Presence. They, who are commanded to prepare for the coming, will have the privilege of seeing their coming God. Even in his coming near, God's presence will remain veiled in mystery. Yahweh's visible manifestation in the sight of all the people will be in a thick cloud at the top of the mountain.

ii) Limiting the People (12-13a).

Yahweh's speech continues. Moses is *to put limits for the people on every side* of the mountain where the people are. The people were sealed off from the sacred precinct. The mountain is to become holy because the holy God will be present. As with Moses when he was instructed to remove his shoes since the ground was holy because of the Presence, so too the people were to know that the mountain was holy to them because of the Presence. It was believed that holiness, like uncleanness, was infectious through physical contact. With the advent of Yahweh, Mount Sinai would become holy by virtue of his special Presence there, and that holiness would constitute a danger to all persons and animals (Durham 1987:265).

All the people are told to *beware and not go up on the mountain or to touch its border*. The people must not presume upon the presence of God. No amount of inquisitiveness must entice them to ascend the mountain to want to be near to God on the same level of intimacy as Moses. God will later invite them up. Neither were they allowed to touch the mountain or the border that was set up. Physical contact

will cause the dangerous holiness to 'infect' them and destroy them. The least contact was forbidden.

The people were not to *touch* the mountain or its border. *Whoever touches the mountain will surely be put to death. Not a hand shall touch (him) it, because he shall surely be stoned to death, or shot through.* The threefold reference to touching is for emphasis (Cassuto 1967:230). We also note a movement from the general to the particular (the corporate "all", the individual "whoever", and the part of the individual -"hand"). We agree (but not without question) with Clements (1972:117) who says that individuals who touch the mountain would have to be put to death not so much as punishment, but in order to prevent the holiness which they had contracted from being dispersed into the profaned world. Why would Yahweh allow them up after the long blast of the ram's horn if that was the reason? We answer by saying that holiness is conferred rather than claimed; it is a gift and not a right. The means of death to the offender is by stoning or by shooting; we assume by bow and arrow. No offender, *whether beast or man shall live.*

iii) Signal for Approach (13b).

An exception to death allowed for special invitation from God to his people to "go up to the mountain", meaning at and around the base but not further up (Stuart 2006:427). *Only after a long blast of the ram's horn can they come to the mountain.* The blowing of a ram's horn normally marked the opening of a sacred festival, heralding the presence of God with his people.

e. Ex. 19:14-15 The Consecration of the People.

This is the second descent of Moses from the mountain, and from the presence of Yahweh. This time Moses comes *down from the mountain* to put into action what Yahweh had instructed them to do. We are not quite sure what procedure Moses applied, but he *consecrated* the people. One must also imagine that *the people*

must have *washed their own garments*. This was not the sum of the people's preparation for the coming Presence.

Moses added another requirement, which we can only assume comes to him from Yahweh. Moses gave the people the imperative to *be prepared for the third day*, and *not to come near a woman*. It, (נָגַשׁ *nā-găš*), simply meant that as part of the preparation, the people were to refrain from sexual relationships until the third day when Yahweh's presence came. The people must take care to be cultic-ly pure by the third day. The sexual act would have rendered them cultic-ly unclean (Lev. 15:16-18) for priestly function. The author uses priestly language which is concerned with the external act. Israel is, therefore, to be prepared by a special act of separation (Childs 1974:369). Breuggemann says that contact with a woman will either profane, weaken, or render them impure (1994:836). Clements says about the same thing: this was to preclude any weakening of the vitality which holiness required, and did not imply that such relationships were regarded as opposed to God (1972:11).

f. Ex. 19:16-19 Anticipating the Theophany.

i) Signs of the Coming Theophany (16).

The third day has arrived. The story is fast-forwarded to *the morning of the third day*. The third day was going to be a day full of new and unexpected things. The coming theophany is preceded by certain unusual phenomena that caused the people to fear. *There were sounds of thunder and lightning flashes*. The word (קוֹל *qôl*) which is translated "sounds of thunder" can be translated either "sound" or "thunder". It could also be translated "voice", which is often, but not here, a poetic expression for the 'voice of the Lord'. A classic storm-theophany is used here to describe the manifestation of God in the form of a storm. Lightning flashes are part of this storm manifestation of God. As part of the storm-motif, there is *a thick cloud*

over the mountain. The word ‘thick’ (כָּבֵד *kā·bēd*) renders both ‘heavy’ and ‘glorious’. The cataclysmic upheaval is caused by the entry of God’s own holiness. Yahweh is an alien presence, a foreboding, threatening, and de-stabilizing otherness.

It begs the question whether the voice of God was both audible and understood by the people. According to Deuteronomy 5:4-5, the people heard the word of God without any need for mediation. It would seem that they heard the delivery of the Decalogue in clear and understandable language, and only thereafter in Exodus 20:18-21, did the people request mediation. This fits in with Deuteronomy 5:5, which seems to contradict the previous verse. So, as in verse 4, the people heard God speak, and in the next, they requested Moses to mediate because of the fearful experience of God speaking directly to them. Moses is now legitimated as God’s special instrument.

In addition, there is *a very loud trumpet sound.* Whether this is the sound made by the ram’s horn mentioned earlier, is unclear. Together with the sounds of thunder and lightning, this trumpet sound causes *all the people who were in the camp* to tremble. The people were filled with fear. Their trembling resembles the violent trembling of the mountain spoken of in verse 18.

ii) Going to Meet God (17).

The writer again returns to describe the effect of God’s presence on Sinai. The trembling people and the trembling mountain are brought together, when in verse 17 *Moses brought the people out from the camp to meet God.* The people *stationed themselves at the foot of the mountain.* The hithpael form of the verb, *stationed* (יָצַב *yā·ṣāb*), can also imply the idea of presenting themselves in the presence of God. Here at the foot of the mountain they would meet God.

iii) Trembling Mountain and Blasting Trumpet (18-19).

The author now describes Mount Sinai as *covered with smoke*. We cannot say whether the ‘thick cloud’ and this ‘smoke’ that covers the mountain are synonymous. One thing is clear though; the smoke that descends with the Lord and the fire, and the smoke that covers the mountain are not the same.

While the presence of Yahweh descended on it in fire – it smoked up like the smoking of a furnace, and the whole mountain trembled violently. The presence of God descended on the mountain. Fire is a symbol of God’s presence in that it represents purity, and is threatening and dangerous, with an elusive attraction (Mackay 2001:334). Like with the burning bush, the Lord was in the fire. It must be noted that the fire descended, and therefore any talk of volcanic eruption cannot be supported as volcanoes spew out ‘fire’ upwardly. The smoke on the other hand that came from it, went up like the smoke of a furnace. The concept of a furnace was not unknown, as there were copper mines in the Midianite territory, which would create the need for smelting furnaces (Cole 1973:148). The whole mountain shook violently. Mackay is correct in saying that the author was trying to describe the indescribable: the presence of God (2001:333). The smoke and the trembling mountain are the effect of God’s presence on Sinai. These effects serve to heighten the awe and terror.

The increasing sound of the trumpet became louder and louder until it was *very loud*. That too, heightened the sense of awe, terror and surprise. The theophany was to center the reverence and attention of the people on Yahweh. The trumpet reaches its greatest intensity, and Moses is seen talking with God, and God is heard answering in a voice. *Moses spoke to God and God answered him with a voice* that might have sounded like thunder. We know that the whole purpose was for the people to hear God speak with Moses. Moses had indeed been legitimated as God’s special instrument, just as he had promised (v.9). Right at the apparent climax of the theophany, the scene is interrupted and Moses is called up the mountain for further instruction.

g. Ex. 19:20-25 The Present God.

Childs (1974:369) describes this section as a dismal climax which disturbs the ongoing movement of the chapter. In this section we have Moses' third ascent on Mount Sinai. The coming God was now present at the top of the mountain. The settlement of Yahweh among his people was now place-specific (here upon the mountain) and was the pre-cursor to Yahweh's dwelling presence in the Tabernacle. The Tabernacle will only be constructed once the Covenant between Yahweh and his people is ratified.

i) God Calls Moses Up (20).

The coming of Yahweh is now established. Our text simply states that *Yahweh came down on Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain*. Previously we are told that Yahweh was descending; now he has descended and settled. So, verse 20 does not depict a second descent of God as some scholars may want to imply. The specific location of Yahweh's presence is given. As was to be expected, Yahweh is now present at Mount Sinai, the Mountain of God, also known as Horeb. The exact place of his presence is given as *the top of the mountain*. It would mean at the highest point. At the climax of the theophany, Yahweh is settled at the "climax" of the mountain. The theophany came to rest on the top of the mountain. Stuart (2006:431) calls it 'the point of contact'. Cassuto (1967:232) sees that the summit was the scene of the theophany in contrast to the foot of the mountain (v.17).

Yahweh called Moses to the top of the mountain and Moses went up. Moses is called to where Yahweh is present. The same specific location as Yahweh is given, namely the top of the mountain. This is Moses' third ascent on the mountain. Whether the previous occasions were so, we cannot say, but this time Moses must go to the top of the mountain. Moses was going to be in the 'immediate' presence

of God. Moses was to find God, who is the Source at the “source” (שֶׁרֶשׁ *rōʿ*) of the mountain.

ii) Instructions for the People (21-24).

Durham (1987:274) states that as exciting as is his Advent onto the mountain, more amazing still is his address to all the people waiting; but first, he speaks to Moses in their hearing. Yahweh told Moses to *go down and warn the people to keep them from breaking through to Yahweh and gazing at him*. This warning may appear superfluous after the statement in verses 12-13. Even Moses thinks so in the next verse. The people were not allowed to look at God. No one could see God and live. It must be noticed *that breaking through* has the connotation of forcefully breaking through in order to look at God. They will *perish* (הָרַס *hā·rās*) if they attempted to do so. They will be destroyed.

The same fate will befall *the priests who draw near to Yahweh* and who have not consecrated themselves. It is odd that this is said when the (Aaronic) priesthood in Israel has not yet been instituted. The only way that this may be explained is to understand this as a principle that will apply into the future as well. At least, the priests will be allowed to come into God’s presence, only upon consecration of them. If they are not consecrated, Yahweh will *break out against them* (פָּרַץ *pā·rās*). This word is used twice, here and in v.24 again. Yahweh will destroy them.

Moses also thinks this warning is superfluous by saying: *The people cannot ascend Mount Sinai because you have charged us and said we must set boundaries around the mountain, for you have sanctified it*. The mountain was holy because Yahweh had sanctified it, and his presence demonstrated its sanctity. Secondly, the people were not able to ascend the mountain because Moses had set boundaries just as the Lord had instructed. Moses’ seeming impatience is unfounded because the warning was given for the sake of the people, who were

theologically naive about the dimensions of divine holiness and the consequences of trespassing.

Verse 24 poses a particular difficulty in its mention of *Aaron and the priests*. The sons of Aaron had not yet been assigned to the priestly office. Childs (1974:375) notes that the rabbis suggested a translation of ‘first-born sons’, but he believes the most obvious explanation is that here we have an historical anachronism. Enns (2000:394) proposes two possible solutions to this problem. Either priests of some sort existed before the official establishment of the priesthood, or portions of this chapter are chronologically displaced. We believe that since in 24:5 it is the young men who offer the sacrifices, there is a real possibility of an informal priesthood in place. Motyer (2005:210) sees no need to concede to an anachronism because the idea of “priest” was widespread in the ancient world, and 19:6 indicates that it needed no explanation in Israel.

Moses is instructed to *go down* and bring Aaron and the leaders. The fact that Moses and the people would find themselves at the foot of the mountain, created the opportunity for Yahweh to speak the Ten Words for all to hear him. Moses did not need to be at the summit, but would hear these words in the same way as the people. God already spoke to Moses in the hearing of the people for their benefit of believing him to be God’s mouthpiece to them. Nevertheless, Moses would eventually take Aaron and them up the mountain (Stuart 2006:433). Again, the people are warned not to *break through to come through to Yahweh, lest Yahweh breaks out against them*.

iii) Moses’ Descent (25).

Moses went down to the people and spoke to them. Moses’ actual words are only to be speculation on our part, but the time has come for their whole attention to be focused on the Decalogue. The theophanic thunder gave way to the real and direct voice of God. Moses, Aaron, the priests and the people were all ready to hear God speak out of the fire, the cloud and the deep darkness (Dt.5:22). This single

sequence given us in chapter 19 was to prepare us for the giving of the Decalogue. There is no reason to believe that it was a collection of various fragments from various sources (Cassuto 1967:235). The purpose of chapter 19 is to recount the preparations for the giving of the Ten Words to the Covenant partners of Yahweh. The theophany that has been described in chapter 19 was not the ultimate revelation that God gave of himself to the Israelites. It clearly revealed his power, majesty and holiness, but God had not come just to overawe the people with his splendor, but to communicate to them his will so that they would know what sort of conduct was expected from them (Mackay 2001:340).

2.4 Theological Reflection.

The important point to acknowledge here is that narrative and law go together, and the law really only makes sense in the context of narrative. Narrative guards against a legalistic interpretation of the law. In fact the narrative of Presence and the giving of the law both authenticate the law and predicates it with grace, as Presence is nothing but an expression of grace to sinful humans. The heart of our text is God's "descending" (Ex.19:11, 18).

At this mountain Yahweh was confirmed to be a saving God. He alone was God sovereign over the gods of the nations. It was given as the sign that he called Moses, and was now fulfilled when the people he saved arrived there. He was going to meet with them there. Yahweh came down on the mountain in the sight of the people. Theophany marked the identity of this people. Theophany gave authority to the communications that happened at the mountain.

The giver of the law interacted personally with those who received it. God redeemed them, and therefore they were expected to respond in obedient gratitude to him. The law is not an imposition from God that is unrelated to Israel's history. The law cannot be grasped without the narrative, and the narrative is incomplete

without the law. The narrative shows the true context of the law. Narrative shaped the people's identity and provided a pattern for the life of faith.

At the center of the theological purpose is the gift of Yahweh's presence to Israel at Sinai. Without the narrative of the Presence, the motivation for keeping the law can hardly be found. The presence of God confirmed his participation in the relationship forward. Their meeting with God is the entry into holiness. Presence is also the true basis for worship and obedience. Each one was to personally experience the coming Presence as God promised to come down in the sight of all the people.

Every ascent of Moses up the mountain was an ascent to the Presence. The preparation of the nation defines the holiness demanded of the Presence. The law defines the holiness demanded of the covenant people. The preparation is a reflection of holy attitude, while the law is a reflection of holy actions. Both attitude and actions must be right in this divine-human relationship. The people of God demonstrated their position with respect to God. They were to be a consecrated people. Only what is holy can be dedicated to the Lord. They pledged themselves to the intentioned position that Yahweh had for them, namely as a kingdom of priests unto Yahweh.

The people have a special and unique relationship with God. They have been chosen by God. God took the initiative. He carried them and cared for them when he brought them out of Egypt. They belong to him on the basis of election and on the basis of redemption. The purpose of their election is two-fold: to act as a nation of priests unto God on behalf of the nations, and to be a holy nation as an example to the nations. Their redemption and the covenant are brought into view here, and are meant to act as their motivation to live commensurate with their holy God who revealed himself to them. They are to share the redemption of God to the world and to bear witness to his final judgment of sin (Childs 1974:383).

The people could not presume upon the Presence because they saw the power of the Presence entering the time and space of the creation order. The Presence had

phenomenal effects on mountain and man. Man was better off at a distance. He needed special preparation to be in the proximity of the Presence. The necessary preparations for the coming were prescribed by the coming Lord himself. Yet, the promise of Presence was unconditional and immediate. The preparation was intended for their own benefit. Unprepared, they could not dare venture into the Presence. It was too dangerous. Besides the special preparations, Israel also needed a mediator, which both Israel and God recognized in Moses. Moses played an indispensable role as mediator, playing the role of priest, prophet and national leader.

Yahweh's personal presence with Israel was accompanied by convulsions of the mountain. The convulsions were accompanied by noises and a storm. Smoke veiled the presence of Yahweh. The convulsing mountain had to be cordoned off so that no one could touch it. The veil and the cordon were there for the protection of the people. They needed the protection from the holy and destructive Presence. If the holy Presence made the mountain convulse, then the proximity of the Presence must have been dangerous. Holiness must be met with holiness. That is why the people had to be consecrated. The holy Presence should not be trivialized at any time.

The scene of the covenant was only right through the self-disclosure of Yahweh, his liberating act and this holy place. Self-disclosure is central and necessary in the process of covenant-making. The very liberated people, who were also now consecrated in Yahweh's presence, were ready to be participants in the process of covenant-making. Their status as the people of God would be confirmed. The place was laden with holy Presence. The mountain was the place where heaven touched earth. The Presence certainly demonstrates the initiative of Yahweh. His presence cannot be coerced. Lordship and revelation go together because lordship has no meaning without revelation.

The conditions for covenant-making included the call to remember the redemptive work of God. The deliverance was Yahweh's decisive victory over the oppressive regime of the Egyptians. Israel was called as eye-witnesses to the fact of the

redemption. They have experienced both the redemptive power and the nurturing power of God. He snatched and carried them like an eagle. God is both awesome in power and in grace. His Presence can evoke both fear and confidence. His Presence is both, a destructive force and a sustaining power. It was a power that brought them to him, and a power that kept them at a distance. They were to love him and obey him. There can be no covenant apart from redemption. God comes in an act of grace to join to himself a people, but on his terms; outside of which we can expect judgment.

Obeying the voice of God entails more than obeying the laws. Keeping covenant was a matter of showing loyalty out of gratitude. They were a treasured possession of Yahweh. They are a choice and valued treasure. They are a treasure belonging privately to the king of heaven. While all the peoples of the earth belong to God, only the redeemed people are peculiarly related to God. This position is aimed at making them instrumental in getting all the nations of the world to acknowledge Yahweh as Pharaoh did. In any, case holiness is conferred rather than claimed.

Having the privilege of the Presence, the Israelites were to be the priestly nation of the world, serving the nations by its service of God. This was their inherent responsibility as heirs of Abraham. They were not kings who happened to be priests. They were subjects to the king of heaven and, as such, priests within this kingdom. They are a nation of priests. They are Yahweh's priests. They are holy unto the Lord. This is clearly a claim for biblical monotheism.

Here is demonstrated to us a corporate response to the Presence. Moses in the call narrative demonstrated an individual response. Now, we are able to see the sum of individuals make a harmonized and collective response. The holiness and Presence requires an appropriate response by the people of God. They pledge faithfulness to Yahweh as a nation chosen and redeemed by Yahweh. Their response shows their acceptance of the invitation to become Yahweh's people among the nations.

God makes allowances for a relationship with a mediator. Moses, who was at first rejected by the people, and who in fact himself rejected the role, was now accepted as the mediator between the people and God. He fulfilled the role of priest in that he represented the people before God; and he fulfilled the role of prophet in that he spoke on behalf of God to the people. He was afforded the privilege of entering and moving from the Presence for the people and for God respectively. Moses was authenticated by direct and witnessed communication between Yahweh and Moses.

There were symbols of God's presence to be found at this incident. Fire was an often accompanying symbol of the Presence. The Lord was in the fire. The fire descended in the same way as it is understood that the Lord descended. The dark cloud was also an often accompanying symbol of the Presence. The specific Presence was understood to be at the highest point of the mountain; often a symbol of God's presence. Theophanic thunder gave way to the real voice of God. Whatever symbol of Presence is employed, it is really only the means the author employs to try and describe the indescribable – the presence of God.

From a canonical approach, we may glean interpretations on our current text from both Testaments. In the Old Testament we shall briefly look at Dt.5:4-22; Dt.7:6; Ps.68:7-9; Is.43:21 and 61:6; and Hag.2:6. In the New Testament we shall consider Acts 7:38; Heb.12:18-20; 1Pt.2:5, 9; and Rev.1:6, 4:5, and 11:19. The allusions to Exodus 19 are theologically applied in different ways and give us an idea of its religious and socio-ethical applications in the context of canon.

In Deuteronomy (5:4-22) Moses gives further expositions on his previous experiences and the details of the Law. He recounts their experience just before and during the giving of the Decalogue. Their experience was meant to encourage them to *hear, learn* and *do* the commands of God (Brown 1993:76). The Israelites had the privilege of both a "face to face" and a mediated communion with God. God was both transcendent and immanent. The majesty of Israel's God is emphasized; and so his openness to speak to his people. There was a sense of

awe and widespread fear. There was an unforgettable sense of God's greatness and transcendence.

Deuteronomy 7:6 calls to mind the holiness and election of Israel, and the statement of Exodus 19:5-6. The election and holiness of Israel was an assured fact, and was indeed a divine achievement. Their holy character does not indicate inherent merit, but rather divine choice (Craigie 1976:179). They were already holy, and their actions were to reflect what they were. Holiness was an act of God, for God has chosen them from among all the nations. Election is thus the reason that makes holiness also a specific obligation to demonstrate their belonging to God as his treasured possession.

In Psalm 68:7-9 we are reminded of God's leading in power. His appearance demonstrated that power. His coming was awesome, making the earth to quake and the heavens to shed abundant rain for provision. Sabourin (1970:160) comments on this text, that Old Testament theology is dominated by the reality of God's interventions in world history, past, present and future. Van Gemeren (1991:446) comments on these verses that the Lord is the God of Sinai by revelation and the God of Israel by covenant (We would rather say, by election).

In Isaiah 43:21 reference is made to Exodus 19:5-6. The Israelites are a people chosen and formed by God. They were formed and chosen for the purpose of bringing praise to God. If, even the wild animals honor God for providing water for his people in the desert, then, so should the people honor him by proclaiming his praise.

In Isaiah 61:6, the prophet reminds the people that they are priests. The nations will call them priests, and in the same way that the Levitical priests were to live by the supplies of the other tribes, so Israel, as ministers of God, will feed off the wealth of the nations. As the Levitical priests were released for their distinctive work because others labored and provided for them, so is Israel's place among the nations to be. This implies that her priestly ministry is to be for the nations' benefit (Grogan 1986:334).

Haggai 2:6 has the distinction that it is the only verse from Haggai that is quoted in the New Testament (Alden 1985:586). It is quoted in Hebrews 12:26 in a rather paraphrased way. There the author makes interpretive comments, stating its connection to Exodus 19. The prophet in this passage applies the Exodus shaking to another coming – that of the Lord’s glory to the second temple. The Lord’s presence was not restricted to any one place.

In the New Testament too there are numerous allusions to our current text. Stephen in Acts 7:37-38 calls to mind the promise to Moses and the Israelites that God will raise up a prophet like Moses as that which is fulfilled in Christ. The words of God spoken in the hearing of the Israelites are referred to as living words that were passed on to the people. These living words could mean enduring words (Newman & Nida 1972:993).

Hebrews 12:18-20 has reference to Exodus 19:12-22. The writer aims to draw a contrast between the old covenant and the new. The New Testament writer shows considerable freedom in its paraphrasing, showing the possibility that the Sinai tradition has developed beyond the Old Testament; using the haggadic style of exegesis (Childs 1974:376). The old covenant was transitory, and the new is eternal. He pictures the Sinai event in highly eschatological language. The writer exhorts to steadfastness in faith, especially in a better covenant with a better mediator, Jesus Christ. The terror of the law is set opposite the freedom of grace. The spiritual in Christ is ultimately unshakable.

In 1 Peter 2:5, 9 we have a positive application of the Exodus text. Peter joins the temple and priesthood motifs. On the one hand, it is common in Old Testament language to speak of the house of Israel and the Lord’s house as a dwelling place for God (Hillyer 1992:67). On the other hand, Israel’s identity as priests is necessitated by the fact of God’s presence. The entire nation of Israel is addressed. The spiritual understanding is a New Testament contribution. What was intended for Israel, Peter sees as fulfilled in the Church for the purpose of

declaring the praises of God. In fact Peter understands the Church to be the true fulfillment of this intention for Israel.

Finally, in Revelation there are a number of references to Exodus 19. In 1:6 (and 5:10) we have been made a kingdom and priests to serve the God and Father of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Jesus is the one who made us such to fulfill an everlasting purpose. Here, however, the people of God are conferred with the authority to rule as kings. They will rule on the earth together with Christ (20:6). This understanding is new in the New Testament. This will be a future eschatological reality for the people belonging to Christ.

In Revelation 4:5 and 11:19 the immediate Presence is accompanied by the theophanic portents that accompanied the coming down of Yahweh in Exodus 19:16-19. The throne and the cover of the Ark of the Covenant are depictions of the Presence. Emanating from the throne and from the Ark in the temple are flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. 11:19 adds an earthquake and a hailstorm to the lightning, rumbles and thunder. Aune (1997:294) observes that John uses the present indicative placing in the foreground the phenomena that occur continually. Not only are the phenomena continuous, but so also is the Presence with the people of God. There will, however, be a culmination, when the people will enjoy the Presence without the fear that was experienced at Sinai.

CHAPTER 3.

A THEOLOGY OF THE REDEMPTIVE PRESENCE.

From our purpose it immediately becomes apparent that our concern is to find a theology which may be applied to a present-day Evangelical ecclesiology. We cannot merely make the jump from the Exodus context to our present ecclesiology. We must formulate a biblical theology that is squarely based upon the text. Yet, it would be better if there was a common denominator to both contexts (then and now). It is important to mention a significant progression which is evident in both, the Exodus context and the Evangelical ecclesiological context, namely, revelation, redemption and relationship.

Presence can be regarded as the first common denominator. In the exodus narrative we cannot talk about redemption (and for that matter also covenant) without Presence. The Lord's personal presence was necessary. Evangelicalism also insists upon an ontological and epistemological necessity of the Lord, Jesus Christ. The Presence-motif, with reference to Jesus Christ, pervades the New Testament, especially in John and Paul (Pereira 2002:140-353). Presence in both instances, Exodus and Evangelicalism, is a category of revelation.

The second common concept is *redemption*, since the narrative in the Exodus texts considered, is about the redemption of Israel, and since the characteristic focus of evangelicalism is its exclusivist soteriological necessity. Redemption is a soteriological concept in evangelicalism (Klein 1998:333). Evangelicalism sees no way, other than salvation or redemption, to have any personal relationship with God.

The concepts of Presence and redemption naturally lead to the motif of *relationship* with God. God discloses himself for the purpose of redemption and relationship. God revealed himself in Exodus for the sake of having a relationship with his

firstborn son, the Israelites whom he has redeemed. Evangelicalism believes that God revealed himself most fully in the person of Jesus Christ for the purpose of providing redemption for those people who would put their faith in him, and so become God's sons. These themes of progression shall now be more fully considered.

A biblical theology of the Presence from the Exodus text will be derived from the theological reflections made on each of the Exodus pericopes' exegesis. We shall seek to unify the statements under the themes: Revelation, Redemption and Relationship. By revelation, we chiefly mean Presence and the theological revelatory aspects related to the presence of God in these pericopes. By redemption, we mean the saving acts of God towards his people demonstrated in these pericopes. By relationship, we mean that relationship which is established by election, redemption and covenant-making between God and Israel and the human responses to God.

It goes without saying that our central interpretive motif is Presence. It is that motif under which we seek to integrate our theology. For the contemporary application of this motif, we have to be Trinitarian in our approach. We believe that we are justified in doing so, as the Trinitarian approach is already evident in our New Testament theological reflections above, and by the way it (the New Testament) interprets much of the Exodus allusions in it. There are both Trinitarian and mediatory interpretations of the Exodus redemptive Presence texts.

3A. A Biblical Theology of the Present God in the Context of the Redemption in Exodus.

The context of redemption in the book of Exodus is found in the first nineteen chapters of the book. While chapter 19 is often included as the introduction to the covenant section of the book, we have chosen to see it as the concluding part of the redemptive act. The arrival at Sinai, the mountain of God, was the complete fulfillment of the redemptive promise of Yahweh in Exodus 3:12, when he said to

Moses: *And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship on this mountain.* Admittedly, one can technically take the redemptive promise to include up to the conquest of the land, but this is never, strictly speaking, applied in this way by wider scholarship. While we could have closed our redemptive text at 19:20, since many believe vv.21ff to be an awkward redaction addition, we have included it nevertheless.

i) Revelation.

God takes the *initiative*. The presence of God is initiated by God himself. He freely and willingly reveals himself. His revelation is unforced. His revelation to Moses was a revelation of his willingness to intervene on Israel's behalf. God offers his personal intervention because he has *seen*; he has *heard*; and he has *come down* (3:7, 8) to meet them. His personal intervention is prompted by his concern for Israel's suffering.

God reveals himself first to Moses. He reveals himself *in a number of ways*. He reveals himself as a holy God; the proximity of his presence is holy. Therefore Moses was required to remove his shoes. God also reveals himself as a God who has a history with the Israelites. He is the God of their forefathers. He particularly mentions the names of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God also reveals himself as a just, sovereign and all-powerful God. He is a miracle-working God, able to show his power for his redemptive purposes.

As a *holy* God, his requirement of his people is holiness. Moses experiences the awesome nearness of that holiness. It demanded reverence, and Yahweh himself commands Moses to remove his sandals. In fact, the Israelites, if they were to be his people, must be a holy people. They had to undergo special preparations for his holy presence. Their act of consecration was an acceptance of the fact of God's holiness. It was also acceptance that they were to be a holy priesthood. They were to be a consecrated people in and for his presence.

As the God *of their history*, Yahweh reveals himself as a covenant- and promise-keeping God. The ultimate honor of Yahweh is at stake when he reveals himself as promise-keeping. God reveals himself for Israel's identity as his treasured possession. God is present for his people. His redemptive purpose for Israel was really confirmation of their election. His covenant with his people is ever before him; he will never forget his covenant; even if they do. God will always remember his covenant.

God reveals himself as a *just* judge. In 3:16 Yahweh has weighed the situation and has judged the Egyptians as contravening the creation principles of *Imago Dei*, and hence the value of human life and freedom. God sets himself on the side of life and freedom. He presents himself on the side of the oppressed, and sets himself against the oppressor. His hand will be heavy against the Egyptians, and he will come forth victorious. God was concerned for the oppressed and for the well-being of his people. God will deal with the Egyptians according to their culpability, because he was in solidarity with their victims. The judgment of Yahweh was upon the Egyptians and their king.

God reveals himself as *sovereign* Lord. God's acts are his sovereign activities. He will harden Pharaoh's heart. He will plague the Egyptians. His people will be delivered, and his will cannot be frustrated. He will cause the Egyptians to be plundered by the slave people. He could give all these assurances as emanations of his sovereignty and power. Pharaoh was going to feel Yahweh's judgment. Pharaoh's sending away will actually be Yahweh's deliverance. Yahweh was the one who mobilized Pharaoh to bring about his deliverance (Stuart 2006:169). Pharaoh was raised for the purpose of demonstrating God's mighty power. Even though Moses interrogated Yahweh (5:22-6:12), he still believed that Yahweh was in control. God's purpose in election stands upon his sovereignty. He is the supremely and absolutely sovereign one. His love cannot be bought or earned.

The visible element of *theophany* functioned to get Moses' and, later, the people's attention. Theophany was for the benefit of the people. Horeb was the mountain of

revelation. The appearance was a self-disclosure. Evident in it is both self-revelation and self-concealing. God's concealment relates to God's holiness. In theophany he limits himself to specific and particular forms. He appears in a variety of forms; in itself an indication of his freedom. The appearances are for the most part spontaneous and effective. The supernatural fire, dark cloud, and portents that accompanied revelation, were merely for the benefit of the people and were expressions of the divine in the natural realm. God is nevertheless supernatural in every sense. These accompaniments of the Presence are therefore precisely the acts of concealment. God may appear in any place and at any time without any manipulation from outside himself. His presence is his own initiative.

God revealed his *Name*. God's name is his story; it summed up who he was. When God gave his name, he opened himself up for the historical community and broke the distance between him and his people (Fretheim 1991:65). He made himself approachable and knowable. The revelation of the Name is an unveiling of God's sovereignty. The Presence authenticated the identity of Yahweh. The auto-confessional, "I am Yahweh" (6:2, 6, 7, 8) encompassed the whole redemptive power of God. The auto-confessional conveyed the idea that God's effective presence was with them and for them. God gave them the history of his self-revelation; what Abraham knew him as, and now, what Israel can know him as; a self-sufficient and covenant-keeping God respectively. The all-sufficient one is also the fulfilling one. Though God is self-contained and incomprehensible, his eternal name is the disclosure of his own person. To know his name is to know his purpose for all mankind.

In the Book of Revelation the Name of God is explicated in terms of his attributes; he is the eternal God; the first and the last; the alpha and the omega; the one 'who was, and is, and is to come', and the faithful one (1:4, 8; 4:8; 11:17 and 16:5). He is therefore the trustworthy one. God is always there for his people; past, present and future. All of God's interventions in human history arose from the concern for his name.

In his revelation, God was willing to *dialogue* and to share his power with his servant. When Moses dialogued with God, he was able to question and even resist God's plan for him. Moses could ask God why he allowed trouble to come upon Israel (5:22). Moses believed he could accuse God of bringing calamity on his people. God allows dialogue of this nature. God showed himself patient with Moses during these times of dialogue. God was willing to communicate his power with him anyway. The Presence authenticated Moses' call. The staff became a transforming power, able to be turned into a living thing (Motyer 2005:78). God was able to make Moses new for the task. God met every inadequacy of Moses with a pledge of his own sufficiency and presence. The creation is able to act with the power of Yahweh according to his purpose. God empowers whom he sends. God was willing to be in partnership.

Yahweh is *faithful* to his promises. He does not act according to deistic principles; he promises Moses to be with him all the way. God will bring his redemptive intentionality to fulfillment. The promise of God provided hope. His word will come true; and he will prove himself faithful and worthy of our faith. God's fidelity as Creator-Ruler and as Redeemer is an attribute to be celebrated. He is therefore the trustworthy one. God gave Moses a word for the future. God's covenant exists before him constantly and will remain faithful to his covenant promises.

Yahweh also reveals himself as the *Divine Warrior*, willing to engage in battle with Pharaoh and the anti-creation forces. Yahweh is a God of war on Israel's behalf. The kingship of Yahweh correlates with the declaration that he is the Divine Warrior of Israel. Pharaoh will know who Yahweh is. The power of God is able to free. As their warrior he was able to lead them out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and he was their rear-guard too. Yahweh was mightier than Pharaoh. When Joseph gave the instruction about his bones, God was at work for hundreds of years orchestrating things to bring about Pharaoh's defeat (Enns 2000:270). He was able to defeat the powers of resistance to bring forth new life that was powerful, original and propagating.

God was *omnipotent*. Yahweh is omnipotent, magnificent and irresistible. He wrought the impossible and created new life for his people. He was able to dry up the sea floor for the benefit of the Israelites. Yahweh was able to use anything and anyone as his instruments for deliverance; by both supernatural and natural means. He could use miraculous and ordinary means. God was at work in the wonderful and in the ordinary. He harnesses the heavens and nature for benefit or for judgment, as he pleases (Perowne 1989:424). The sovereign Lord of every force within the created order will use them to bring to his people his deliverance decisively, comprehensively and completely. The water and the forces of nature received special powers to affect liberation. Yahweh was able to work day and night to procure Israel's salvation. Yahweh proved his incomparability (Kraus 1993:114). None of the powers of evil in the world can stop Israel's redeemer.

The Lord is *omniscient*. He omnisciently promised Moses success. He leads the right way. He knew and anticipated every response of Pharaoh and of the Israelites. He knew that Pharaoh would think that the Israelites were confused in their flight. He also knew that the Israelites could not face battle too soon and took them another route. He knew what every possible route held for them. The concern of Yahweh for Israel had to take into account the prevailing sociopolitical and emotional contexts. The pillar was a sign of Yahweh's presence, stable and visible. God was present in the pillar, and it became the vantage point from which Yahweh anticipated Israel's needs. The pillar took on characteristics that responded to the needs of the people. It was able to lead and to defend. It was their tangible assurance that Yahweh was present. Isaiah later speaks of the glory of the Lord as the rear guard of the people (58:8). By the pillar, his people had light and the oppressor, darkness.

God's revelation in his acts of creation and redemption is a revelation of *his greatness*, awesomeness and holiness. Every revelation of his otherness is the glory of his majestic power and justice in his acts of judgment and deliverance. His righteousness is expressed in a succession of glorious acts in Israel's history. He has shown himself to be a God of grace, transforming the history of Israel into *heilsgeschiede* (Weiser 1959:642). Later the prophet juxtaposes the Exile and the

Exodus to demonstrate both God's justice and God's goodness. God's goodness should inspire gratitude in the people of God. God's reputation comes a long way; since the deliverance from Egypt, and continues eternally for his people. The immanence of God in Israel's history shows his continued faithfulness.

God's presence was *available for his people* to witness. God came down for them. Theophany marked the identity of the people. Theophany communicated God's authority. The redeemer and law-giver interacted personally. Yahweh's presence was a gift to Israel. The Presence motivated worship, holiness and obedience to the law. The presence of God confirmed his participation in the relationship forward. In fact the self-disclosure is central and necessary for a relationship with God. God took the initiative in this relationship. This being so, the people could, nevertheless, not presume upon God's presence. It was a destructive Presence if trivialized. God's presence, though unconditional and immediate, required special preparation. Holiness must meet holiness. Therefore, the veil and the cordon were necessary for the people's protection.

The *place* of God's presence is holy; it is made holy by the Presence. The Mountain of God was laden with holy Presence. The place of the Presence, by its convulsions, shaking and trembling, acknowledged Yahweh's lordship, as lordship and revelation go together. Presence can evoke both fear and confidence. God is awesome both in power and in grace, being destructive and sustaining. The Presence made the Mountain a place, both, out of reach and near. It is both majestic and open. God is both transcendent and immanent. The presence of God is, in fact, indescribable. The Exodus shaking is also applied to other comings of God; for Haggai, when God comes to the second temple; for the writer to the Hebrews, when the judgment comes with the Lord of glory; for the seer in Revelation, these phenomena that acknowledge Presence will occur continually.

Yahweh stands as God *alone*. The gods of Egypt were not gods at all. They were impotent and withholding life; but Yahweh is powerful, life-giving and life-sustaining. Holiness was an attribute of God. He alone is holy. Holiness was an act of God. Whoever is holy was made such by the holy God and by his presence.

There will be a culmination of Presence; when the people enjoy the Presence without fear, yet with complete reverence and joy.

ii) Redemption.

Presence and redemption are the key concepts found in the first nineteen chapters of Exodus. As with Presence, redemption is also God's initiative. Redemption is what God does for humans, and more specifically for the purpose of making them his people. Surely, all the earth belongs to the Lord, but redemption is an act of setting people apart to relate to God in a special way and in accordance with his character and purpose. God will by special intervention redeem his people, and their deliverance becomes the basis for positive and acceptable response to God. The concept of redemption is interchangeable with the concepts of deliverance, liberation and salvation.

Redemption is predicated by the idea that the world can be changed. Sometimes it can be changed by reformation, when people and situations change gradually for the better. Sometimes change comes by revolution, where there is a decisive overthrow of the social order. Sometimes one's world is changed by introversion, where you withdraw to a context where you can recreate your desired situation. All these are human initiated interventions. Redemption in the biblical context is initiated by God and for his ongoing purpose to prevail. The redeemed people's world is actually changed by relationship which is initiated by the event of salvation.

Even though redemption is by God's initiative, he selects to use a mediator in the process. God reveals himself to Moses as the creator who redeems. God's covenant and creation intentions are fulfilled in his act of redemption. Moses became the extension of God's hand. He was God's man and was given the ability to do mighty signs in order to affect God's deliverance. Moses counts himself inadequate for the task, but Yahweh makes two important promises to Moses in answer to his inadequacies, namely that he will be with him (3:12), and that he will instruct him what to say (4:12, 15). Though the Israelites initially rejected Moses,

they finally saw that he was God's man. Jesus Christ too, though rejected by the Jews, would be the approved deliverer (Acts 7:36); he is chosen by God to be savior (Kebble 2000:98). Redemption leads to a new creation (Fretheim 2003:250).

The presence of God with Moses answers every inadequacy of the mediator. Yahweh prepared Moses. The promise of Presence served as a motivation to act without fear and in conviction of his calling. The mediator was one who comes from the presence of God, who can, on God's behalf, communicate the redemptive idea with the people. God empowers whom he sends. God endowed him with the power of miracles (or more accurately, signs) to make him believable. The Creator gave Moses the ability to order and dispatch creation to the ends of redemption. The people must buy-in; they must want to be redeemed and Moses must provide them with the motivation.

While we seek to explain this more fully under the heading of 'Relationship', we need to say that redemption was predicated on a historical relationship between God and Israel. God was to act in favor of his first-born son (4:22) in his act of redemption. He was the God of their forefathers; the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God's prior promises to them through the forefathers were not to be forgotten. God's remembrance of their historical relationship prompted the deliverance. It was no sudden impulse (Mackay 2001:61). God had an ongoing commitment. When God gave his name he was willing to join the historical community and show himself as being for them. Yahweh's redemptive purpose was linked to his historical relationship with them. Indeed, their own recognition of this relationship opened them to the idea of being redeemed by the God of their forefathers.

The Israelites entered Egypt as guests of Joseph. Joseph's faith in the return of the Israelites to the land God promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, made him have the Israelites promise on oath that his remains (bones) be taken with them when they leave Egypt (Gen.50:24). The guests in Egypt became the slaves of Egypt. While slavery was common in their world, Israel's slavery in Egypt was one of cruel oppression and exploitation. In fact, it became apparent that the Egyptians

increased their cruelty on the grounds of the Israelites' increase in number. They did not quite realize that the increase was in fact a blessing from their God.

The rights of the Israelites were taken away in slavery, and they were oppressed to a point of misery. The depth of their despair and despondence even defeated their hope (6:9). They cried out in anguish as the hard hand of the Egyptians leaned heavily upon them. Their cry was heard in heaven and God was going to respond personally and decisively, both to save them and to punish the Egyptians for their inhumane treatment of his people. God was concerned about their well-being.

Egypt contravened the creation principles in that they did not preserve human dignity, and by that, set themselves against the Creator. Yahweh, the king of Israel was set in conflict against Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. The stage was set for war between the two kings; only, the subjects of Yahweh were not going to engage in battle, and Yahweh was going to come up alone against the Egyptians. Moses was expected to partner with Yahweh. Yahweh will come forth victorious. Redemption victory was the answer to the people's oppression.

Redemption was going to be a process. Yahweh omnisciently promised Moses success. The heart of Pharaoh will be hardened. The Israelites must be weaned from their dependency upon Pharaoh. The Egyptians will be plagued with the kind of plagues that proved their gods to be impotent. The people must participate in the show that distinguished them from the Egyptians. The Egyptians will arrive at the conviction that it is better for the Israelites to leave their land, and in this conviction allow themselves to be plundered by their former slaves. The Israelites must leave Egypt with all their belongings. Pharaoh will regret letting the people leave and decide to pursue them. This will set the stage for the final confrontation. Israel will be liberated and Egypt will be comprehensively defeated. God's redemption purpose for Israel will eventually overflow to the Gentiles (Kaiser 1997:570).

Redemption was possible only because Presence was possible. God is present for his people. His self-disclosure and presence was what chiefly provided Israel with their identity as Yahweh's possession. But his redemption added to their identity as

Yahweh's possession. His self-disclosure came about because he was intimately affected by their suffering. The suffering of his people was also his suffering. He was present in the midst of their suffering, and he made himself present so that he could redeem them and so completely transform their situation. They will move from redemption to creation; to a new way of life. God's disclosure is for his people; in the past, present and future.

Egyptian oppression was nevertheless necessary; for the Israelites to realize that they needed to break their dependency on Egypt on the one hand, and that they were to experience Yahweh's redeeming power on the other. Egypt could not be dealt with according to their culpability for as long as Israel was dependent upon them. Israel would then be adversely affected in that case. It was in Egypt's punishment that Yahweh's power would be evidenced. Yahweh will deal harshly with Egypt on behalf of their victims. His redemption on the one hand, and his punishment on the other, will be quick and decisive. God is to show himself full of holy zeal against Egypt's wickedness.

The people of God were invited in the redemptive action through a prophetic oracle to Pharaoh and to the Israelites. The oracle, *this is what Yahweh, the God of Israel says...*, was an invitation to both the Israelites and the Egyptians. Yahweh's aim is to make himself known to Pharaoh and to the Israelites. Pharaoh must discover that Yahweh is Lord over all, and Yahweh's people must rely on him alone. Pharaoh must acknowledge the mighty hand of Yahweh, but he would not do so until the mighty hand of Yahweh prevails over him. The Israelites must accept the word of Yahweh; he gave them a word for the future in his promise to deliver them.

There was a battle to be waged between Yahweh and Pharaoh. Pharaoh was going to feel Yahweh's judgment. Pharaoh will be forced to do according to Yahweh's behest (Stuart 2006:169). Yahweh actually mobilizes Pharaoh to bring about his people's redemption when Pharaoh submits to the heavy-handed judgment of Yahweh. The salvation that Yahweh was to provide had the characteristic of forcibly freeing; snatching out of the grip of the oppressor.

Yahweh takes the redemptive initiative. The seven *I will* clauses of 6:6-8 have verbs of hope and liberation that arise out of the divine Name. Providing hope is the grace of God displayed. Yahweh will act for the honor and well-being of the wounded; the victims; the oppressed. God was in solidarity with the oppressed. This solidarity extended beyond the events of the exodus. God is at the forefront of the liberation of his people, and generally of oppressed people. We obviously refer to liberation methods that are commensurate with the character of God, which are according to the principles of hope, faith and grace (love).

Redemption, because it is a divine act, is also a miraculous act. It involves a display of God's power. God acts according to his justice and holiness towards the oppressor, and according to his love and faithfulness towards his people. Every miraculous act supports these attributes of his. He is able to dry up the sea bed as a highway for his people to pass through the sea. He is able to use the natural with powers supernatural to affect his salvation. He was able to use anything and anyone as the instruments of his deliverance. Their encouragement to be still was an encouragement to exercise faith in Yahweh that overcomes fear.

Fear and confusion were to be transferred to the Egyptians (14:24-25). Their war machine was rendered useless. The Israelites could cross the path with the ease of horses running in an open field (Isa.63:11-14), while the Egyptians' horse-drawn chariots were frustrated and got stuck in the same path. The sovereign God of the universe can make the created order benefit his people and frustrate those with counter-creation aims. Pharaoh is to know that Yahweh is great and to be feared (14:4). God's great feat in rescuing his people from his hand is also occasion for Yahweh's fame to be declared among the nations. The rescue is a work to be admired by the whole world.

The redemption of God required the people to follow. Redemption is never forced upon those to be rescued. Because redemption is aimed at worship, it cannot be forced upon the victims. If it is, they will not respond out of worshipful gratitude. Redemption must create a people of faith and of praise. Redemption only comes by faith. Corporate (national) faith was the basis for individual faith (Heb.11:29).

This aim is commensurate with the call to become a kingdom of priests and a nation belonging to God. This is how God wants to be known and related to by his people.

The Presence for redemption was expressed in theophany. The pillar had its role to play in redemption. The pillar was a tangible assurance that God was present with his people (Fretheim 1991:151). It went ahead and led the people along a path that was best for them and for God's purpose. It went to their rear and protected the people from the ensuing Egyptians, who were desirous to recapture and enslave them. The pillar was a divinely imposed barrier (Mackay 2001:244). It regulated the movement of the people; where it stood, the people encamped, and when it moved, the people moved. It provided shade in the heat of day, and light at night. It led them to the mountain of God. Theophany on the mountain "welcomed" them to the mountain of God, and confirmed them as the people of God. Theophany taught them how to relate to the holy God.

The invisible presence of God caused the waters and the forces of nature to receive special powers to affect liberation (Ps.77:16f) of his people and judgment on the oppressors (Ps.77:19). Judgment comes against the forces of evil and oppression. The "plundering" given by the oppressor was also the reparation to the slaves for the exploitation and cruelty they have endured. God's justice prevailed. The Lord delivered his people with supplies of silver and gold, so initiating their prosperity too.

Redemption is from something to something. The people were redeemed from Egypt to the Promised Land; a land of milk and honey. This was no new promise to the redeemed people; it came from the promise God made to Abraham. They will again enter the land of joy. It was a promise to be repeated when the people were in exile. Every redemption from exile was to be a redemption in the order of, or more wonderful than, the Exodus redemption (Herbert 1975:106). It would be patterned according to Israel's deliverance from Egypt (Jer.23:7-8). God would act as he acted in creation and in the exodus. His power is sufficient to defeat the pernicious forces of chaos. Each deliverance is a triumph of God. Being led

through the sea was being led to a new existence of freedom and God's provision (1Co.10:1). Redemption was not to be contaminated with an ungodly life (Clark 1975:151).

Ultimately, redemption will be salvation from the slavery under Satan and his Beast (Rev.15:2f). Believers in Christ will sing the song of the Lamb rather than the song of Moses or Miriam. They are to share the redemption of God to the world, and to bear witness to his final judgment of sin (Childs 1974:383). The call to remember the redemption is a call to remember and celebrate God's decisive victory over the oppressive regime of Satan and his emissaries. We are witnesses to redemption as a people chosen and formed in a new covenant by God in Christ.

iii) Relationship.

In the context of our Exodus narrative we have relationships expressed on various levels that impact national, international, religious, social and individual affairs. While this is so, we seek to see the connection of Presence with all of these. How does Presence influence every level of relationship? This very question must be predicated upon the ideas of revelation and redemption. The narrative is about redemption and Presence.

There is, however, also a narrative substrate. How is the narrative of Exodus connected with the history of the people before this stage of the narrative is reached. In fact, this substrate is also the substrate for relationship on a national level. What is the connection between the Genesis narrative and that in Exodus? What relational connection is there between the people of Genesis and those of Exodus? It becomes necessary to show the connection between Abraham and the Israelites redeemed from Egypt.

In the relationship between the Book of Exodus and the Pentateuch, it may be said that Exodus is at the center of the Pentateuch. Our interest in establishing prior connections, forces us to only consider its relationship with Genesis. The opening

five verses of Exodus connect the Israelites with Jacob and his family. It specifically links the genealogy with the report of Genesis 47:27-28. The people whose story Exodus tells are to be identified with the family of Jacob that had migrated to Egypt. In our specific interest, it must be mentioned that Jacob was the grandson of Abraham, and that the covenant God made with Abraham, God confirmed also with Jacob (Gen.35:10-15).

The oppressive sojourn in Egypt and the exodus are foretold in Genesis 15:13-15. These divine promises are the driving force behind God's actions on behalf of the enslaved Israelites, as God "remembers" the covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Ex.2:24; 6:4-5, 8 cf. Gen.15:18; 17:1-8). Exodus 1:7 also establishes a connection between the growth of the Israelites in Egypt and the divine word in creation (see Gen.1:28; 9:1, 7). That is to say, God's activity among the Israelites has a creation-wide purpose (Fretheim 2003:250). God's covenant and creation intentions are fulfilled in his act of redemption.

On the national level of relationship and the historical connection with Genesis, one has to ask the question about Israel's election. The aspect of election will express itself in wider relationships. Wright (2003:216) asserts that in the Pentateuch itself, election is the central concept used to recapitulate the story of God's promise to Israel. The term also points forward to the story of God's establishment of Israel in the land with a temple and a king. We must also admit that election per sé, is only significantly explicated in the Book of Deuteronomy. In its retelling of the exodus story, we are not only given a summary of the story, but we are also given a theological interpretation that includes the understanding of election. The idea of election is, however, not entirely absent in Exodus. Exodus 19:5-6 is especially important here.

Exodus 19:5-6 is interpreted in Deuteronomy 7:6-8. Yahweh has chosen Israel out of all the nations of the earth, not because of any merits, but because of the Lord's grace. The oath made to their ancestors is all part of this predetermined and sovereign choice of Yahweh. It was because of this oath that Yahweh redeemed them from the house of slavery and from the hand of Pharaoh. Election is about

God's faithfulness to his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. We will not here entertain the question of priority; does the covenant come because of election, or, is election as a consequence of covenant? Moses' recapitulation of the exodus story reinterprets it all as a story of Yahweh's election of Israel (Wright 2003:217).

Election is a communal and national (not individualistic) concept about the life of Israel in the world. Israel is to live as a holy people towards their God, other nations and among themselves. Election therefore alludes to Israel's vocation. In relation to Yahweh, they are his treasured possession. In relation to the other nations, they are a holy nation dedicated to show forth the praises of Yahweh. Israel is therefore not to withdraw from the world. They must stand as witnesses of God's goodness and his greatness. In relation to the community, they are to interact within creation, redemptive and covenant principles.

God is interested for the Israelites to experience a utopian setting. They are to inherit a spacious land of plenty. This existence is conducive to worshipping God out of gratitude. It is aimed at demonstrating to the nations that their God is for them, providing all their needs. If they break covenant, they will suffer loss and poverty, so becoming a stench to their God and to the nations. Their Exodus state of slavery and oppression is, however, not because of a break in covenant; it comes upon them as a result of God's favor – their numbers have increased to the discomfort of their Egyptian hosts. Their increase in number is a posterity covenant-promise fulfillment. Abraham was promised that his offspring would become numerous.

The character, Moses, also relates to different characters on different levels. These are for the most defined by his roles. Firstly, he relates to Yahweh. He is Yahweh's messenger; a prophet. His relationship with Yahweh afforded him a special privilege of the immediate presence of God. He had the promise of Yahweh's continued presence, and thus of successfully executing his task. The immediate Presence is also one of intimacy. In addition, God intimated his name and the history of his revelation with Moses. Moses had a personal relationship with

Yahweh. Yahweh promised him, not only to be with him, but also to be with his mouth (4:12). Moses' very behavior was regulated by the presence of God with him.

He was Yahweh's partner in procuring the redemption of the Israelites. He was Yahweh's mouthpiece to Pharaoh and to the Israelites; to Pharaoh with the task of persuading him to let the people go, and to the Israelites as mediator between them and Yahweh, their God. Yahweh sent Moses to Pharaoh and to the Israelites. At first, Moses is unsuccessful with both Pharaoh and the people of God. Pharaoh denies any knowledge of Yahweh, and therefore sees no need to heed his command. The people blamed Moses for provoking the wrath of Pharaoh with his first approach to him on their behalf. Moses, in turn, blamed Yahweh for 'failing' on his promise to free the people.

With Moses' partnership, Yahweh guaranteed him success. He was endowed with power to do signs (miracles) before Pharaoh and the Israelites. These signs authenticated his position as prophet and as redeemer, as both Pharaoh and the Israelites presented the challenge of believability and acceptance. God prepared Moses for this project. His own salvation from among the reeds to the palace of Pharaoh; his mother, selected as his nurse-maid and her influence on him; His flight from Egypt and his shepherding of the Midianite's flock; and the forty years as a shepherd that led him to the Mountain of God. All this was Yahweh's providential activity in the life of Moses.

Secondly, Moses related to Aaron in a specific way. Aaron was his brother, and he would become Moses' prophet. Moses was as God to Aaron. As Yahweh was to put words in Moses' mouth, so Moses was to put words in Aaron's mouth. Aaron was brought into the picture to serve Moses. It also would seem that Aaron was a good contact between Moses and the elders of the Israelites. When the Israelites initially reject Moses, they in effect also rejected Aaron (5:20-21). Yet, later the people took Aaron's ruling in the absence of Moses (cf. chp.32).

Thirdly, Moses' relationship with the Elders of Israel existed because of the social structure that was in place. They were in fact the voice of the people. It seems that the communication between Moses and the people was actually the communication between Moses and the Elders. The Elders would later be led by Moses into the personal presence of Yahweh (chp.24). It would nevertheless be incorrect to think that the people at large were without a voice. The people's response in the narrative must be taken as the collective response of all the Israelites.

Therefore, fourthly, Moses had a relationship with the people. He was their leader. He was their deliverer. He was their mediator between them and Yahweh. He was the one to take the blame for anything that went "wrong". He shouldered their complaints. He relayed to them the words and commands of Yahweh and was accepted as Yahweh's spokesman. Moses dispensed the wonder-works of God for their benefit and redemption. He prayerfully interceded for them before God. Later, Moses would become their covenant mediator. All of these were enhanced by the fact that Moses had access to the presence of God. He did what he did because God was present with him and the people accepted it as such.

The Israelites as a community also related to others. They related to Yahweh as his people. That relationship would become their characterizing mark. How they related to other people was largely influenced by their relationship with Yahweh. They were his elect. They were Yahweh's firstborn son; in line for Yahweh's inheritance. But, first they were to be redeemed by Yahweh and his servant, Moses. It was chiefly in this context that Yahweh demonstrated his favor upon them (Enns 2000:96). They were the object of his love.

The divine promises were theirs. The covenant with their forefathers prompted God's ongoing commitment to them. God linked his redemptive purpose with his historical relationship with them. God's revelation to them got them to accept that they were his possession. God was intimately affected by their suffering in Egypt. His presence with them was an indication of his approval of them (Janzen

1979:235). Yahweh's appearances were beneficent in nature. They must rest in Yahweh's creative presence.

Their relationship with Yahweh was past, present and future. The dead as we know them were not excluded from a relationship with God. In the New Testament (Mt.22:32; Mk.12:26 and Lk.20:37), Yahweh is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and he is the God of the living. That meant that the patriarchs were alive in God. At present God was redeeming them from the oppressive grip of Pharaoh. Their well-being in the future is guaranteed by the presence of God with them. Their very testimony to the nations depends upon the ongoing Presence with them (Freedman 1998:460). All they needed to do was to exercise their faith unswervingly, even when the Presence is intimidating. They were to put their hope in the Lord.

God was their shepherd. When they followed him as a young bride (Jer.2:1-8), he showed her passion and protected her all the way (Ryken 2001:38). God was steadfast in his love toward his bride. They were to remain holy and faithful to their God. The Presence required this from them. Theophany marked the identity of the people. They were led with a power that brought them to Yahweh.

Theophany made the law, not something imposed upon them, but something that elevated their relationship with Yahweh. The Presence was motivation for keeping the law. The Presence was real to each one of them so that they were able also to dedicate themselves corporately to God. Keeping covenant was a matter of loyalty out of gratitude. They were a choice and valued treasure of Yahweh, and keeping covenant was commensurate with the character of their Lord. Holiness and election was conferred upon them, never claimed. They were a nation of priests.

It is taken for granted in the Book of Exodus that Israel is God's people. Yahweh refers often to them as his people (Ex.3:7; 3:10; 6:7; 7:4; 7:16; 8:1; 8:20; 8:21; 8:22; 8:23; 9:1; 9:13; 9:17; and 10:3). In all, Israel can be called the People of God. In Exodus 6:7, God says, "I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God". There was a mutual relationship in place; the Israelites were Yahweh's

people, and Yahweh was their God. It was meant to be both mutual and exclusive. This, perhaps, is the essential statement of the covenant relationship between Israel and Yahweh. This statement, interestingly, is found throughout the Old Testament with reference to Israel, and in the New Testament with reference to the Church.

The people also had a relationship with Pharaoh, albeit a destructive one. They were the slaves of Pharaoh. They were there for his selfish benefit. Their life was not important for him to preserve. He exacted from them beyond what they were able to give. He deprived them from what he alone could give. Pharaoh interpreted their need to worship their God as “laziness”. Their desire to worship became an occasion for him to demonstrate his cruelty towards them, bringing more calamity and trouble. Pharaoh was the source of Israel’s oppression and wounding.

There was also a relationship between Pharaoh and Yahweh. Pharaoh was antagonistic towards Yahweh, especially when Yahweh revealed his redemptive purposes. Pharaoh’s response to Yahweh was one of indifference and arrogant defiance. He did not acknowledge Yahweh, and tauntingly denied any knowledge of him. He showed complete disregard for God’s redemptive intentions. Pharaoh was competing with Yahweh for the ownership of the Israelites.

Pharaoh’s real relationship to Yahweh, the sovereign Lord, was that of being reduced to a mere pawn. Pharaoh was raised for the purpose of demonstrating God’s mighty power. The conflict for paternal power existed only because Pharaoh was unwilling to admit Yahweh’s sovereignty. As an oppressor Pharaoh provoked God’s intervention. Pharaoh will finally bow to Yahweh. Through the mouths of his charioteers and horsemen, he finally acknowledges Yahweh as sovereign.

Finally, Israel has a relationship with the nations of the earth. Israel was called as eye-witnesses to the fact of redemption. The redemptive and nurturing power of God needed to be communicated with the nations for the purpose of declaring the praises of God. They were a people chosen and formed by God for the purpose of bringing praise to God. They were to be a priestly nation of the world, serving the

nations by its service of God. They were priests to live off the wealth of the nations, and for the benefit of the nations (Grogan 1986:334).

3B. Applying the Exodus Theology of Presence in an Evangelical Ecclesiology.

Our discussion here is to briefly explain evangelicalism and its ecclesiology, but before we can embark on that discussion we must talk first about evangelical soteriology. Evangelical ecclesiology is derived from evangelical soteriology. The understanding of the means and extent of salvation is foundational to any discussion of ecclesiology, as evangelicals are characterized by their special emphasis on sin, salvation and saving faith (Deist 1986:57). We shall then discuss evangelical ecclesiology in the context of the common denominators of revelation, redemption and relationship.

a). Evangelical soteriology briefly explained.

König (1998:83) correctly characterizes Evangelical Christians in three ways; as people who have had a personal experience of Jesus Christ; they have a very high view of the Bible; and they share their faith with others. From the biblical material, evangelicalism holds that some will be saved and others will not. What is salvation? How do they obtain the means of salvation? How does one come to faith, and what does faith mean? What role does God play in salvation? These are the important soteriological questions for evangelicalism. We do not intend to define every word or concept; taking for granted the generally understood meanings. There might be various shades of meanings, but they are really only “shades” of the same color.

God has provided his Son, Jesus Christ for the salvation of all who believe. The basis for anyone’s salvation is personal faith in Jesus Christ, thereby accepting

God's provision (Carnell 1959:70). Those who believe in Jesus Christ are saved, and those who do not believe are not saved (Jn.3:18). But how will they believe if they do not hear, and how will they hear unless someone preaches to them (Rom.10:14-15)? The message they must hear is the message about the good news of God's provision in Jesus Christ, called the Gospel.

The preaching of the gospel, however, can only affect faith if it is endowed with the Holy Spirit's power; and a faith so affected and applied can bring spiritual transformation (Ramm 1957:28-37). Again, it is the Holy Spirit who brings about transformation. This transformation is also referred to as regeneration and sanctification. Regeneration is communicating the resurrection life of Jesus. Sanctification is becoming Christ-like; stated otherwise, that is becoming holy. If any man is in Christ, he is a new creation (2Co.5:17). If the resurrection of Jesus Christ is applied in this way, how is the death of Jesus applied?

Salvation, however, is having sin's effect cancelled, because the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ (Rom.3:23). The New Testament explains how sin's effect is cancelled on three planes generally prescribed by the Old Testament, especially in the Pentateuch. On the forensic plane (of holiness) sin declares man unrighteous and culpable. He needs *to be justified* before a just and holy God. Secondly, on the relationship plane, sin rendered man hostile to God; thus, man needs *to be reconciled* to God. Thirdly, on the plane of slavery and human depravity, man needs *to be redeemed* by God as he is unable to redeem himself and remedy his state. Paul, especially, recognizes that the death of Jesus Christ provides the solution on all three planes, and faith facilitates the transfer of the solutions Christ provides to the believer.

Forensically, Jesus Christ alone is righteous. Besides him there is none righteous, no not one (Rom.3:10-12 *cf.* Ps.14:1-3), because all have sinned, and the wages of sin is death (Rom.3:23; 6:23). God revealed his righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ on all who believe (Rom.3:22). Righteousness is a legal status (Wenham 1995:55). God's righteousness is fulfilled through the life and death of Jesus Christ. Righteousness came apart from the Law; that is, apart from any good

works. Through faith the righteousness of Christ is imputed upon the believer; and so the believer obtains *justification* through his faith (Rom.3:26). The just shall live by faith (Rom.1:17 *cf.* Hab.2:4). Being justified, means the judgment is removed and the believer is now no more under condemnation. There is now therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ (Rom.8:1).

As far as *reconciliation* is concerned; again, Jesus is presented as an atoning sacrifice. It came in two ways through Jesus Christ. Having been made righteous (being justified) we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom.5:1). Peace with God is the language of reconciliation. The other way was through the act of propitiation (Rom.3:25); the sprinkling of the blood on the atonement cover harked back to *Yom Kippur* in Leviticus 16:14f. The blood of Jesus shed on the cross was an atonement sacrifice made once for all and always. There is a cosmic vision to the idea of reconciliation (Wenham 1995:60). According to Hebrews chapter 10 Jesus' atonement needs not be repeated every year because his sacrifice is able, even, to cleanse our consciences. Jesus took away the hostility and replaced it with peace. Faith in Jesus Christ meant acceptance of his atoning work, and therefore reconciliation to God.

As far as *redemption* was concerned, the chief underlying Old Testament concept was that of the Passover Lamb and the sending away of the Israelites by their Egyptian oppressors. The Passover Lamb was life-saving to the people of God, when, to the contrary, the Egyptians lost their first-borns to the Lord's judging angel. Christ is our Passover (1Co.5:7) sacrificed for us. The believer is therefore liberated from the dominion of sin and of death by the blood of the Lamb – Rom.6:14-23 (Wenham 1995:149). Believers are therefore holy and belonging to the Lord. They are no longer slaves to sin because the blood of Jesus, God's Son, keeps on cleansing them from all sin (1Jn.1:7).

By faith in Jesus Christ, the believer realizes an escape from the divine judgment through the act of justification. For such, the final judgment will be confirmation of the validity of justification (Bloesch 1978: 2: 182). Those who did not believe and have done evil, they will be resurrected to condemnation (Jn.5:29). Secondly, the

believer also escapes the divine wrath when his status is changed from enmity to being reconciled. Lastly, the believer escapes divine abandonment, and through redemption experiences regeneration, which is the new creation in Jesus Christ. This concept fits with our Exodus understanding; redemption is an act of creation, undoing anti-creation.

So, evangelicalism does not believe in universalism. Though salvation is universally available, it is not universal. Though there may be various approaches to the question of Predestination and Election, these do not change the fundamental belief; that not all are, or will be, saved (Thiessen 1979:106). Everyone must respond by true faith in Jesus Christ. Salvation required the physical death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The physical existence of Jesus required the incarnation of the second person of the Trinity according to the will of the Father. The Holy Spirit brings spiritual application to these physical acts of Jesus Christ. The believer is given spiritual life, which is eternal life. He is able to live the spiritual life in the physical world by the enabling of the indwelling Holy Spirit, whom he receives at the time he trusts in Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is the seal that guarantees the believer's salvation.

b). Evangelical Ecclesiology.

Though faith is individualistic and subjective, salvation is corporate. Salvation belongs to the people of God. Salvation is brought about through the activity of the Trinitarian God (Wainwright 1962:256-260). To be saved is to belong to Jesus Christ. To be saved is to be sons of God through adoption. It is to have and to be sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise (Eph.1:13). To be saved is to belong to the People of God (2Co.6:16). The people of God are known by the various connections it has to the Trinitarian God. They are known as the Body of Christ (1Co.12:13 and Rom.8:9). They are the Temple of the Holy Spirit (1Co.3:16f). Evangelicals believe that you cannot be saved and not belong to the People of God, which is the Body of Christ and the Temple of the Holy Spirit (Beasley-Murray 1992:49). Conversely said, they believe that only saved individuals belong to the

Body of Christ. Therefore, the Church consists only of regenerate members. In this way, then, God saves only the Church of Jesus Christ. The Church alone is the redeemed community.

By “church” we recognize two forms of existence; namely the local church, as in the gathering together of believers to worship and fellowship, and the universal body of saved individuals, both Jews and Gentiles. The local church is often denominational, sometimes having different emphases, styles of worship, forms of governance, cultural colorings and, even, “unredeemed” individuals as members. While the benefits of exercising spiritual gifts benefit the local church and in some specific ways the universal body, the culmination of salvation will be ultimately manifested in the Church universal. There is one faith, one body, one Lord, and the Parousia is for the one universal body. The coming again of Christ will be the event of separating the regenerate from the un-regenerated. It is nevertheless an imperative that the local church derives its identity from the Church universal.

In reference to the Church universal, while there are many images of the Church (*cf.* Minear 1960), the three that implicitly show a Trinitarian connection are the most important ones; The People of God, The Body of Christ, and The Temple of the Holy Spirit. Evangelicalism is strictly Trinitarian; God as Father, Christ as Son, and the Holy Spirit are the three persons in the Trinity.

i). People of God.

God’s decision to make believers his people is reflected in 2Co.6:16; “God said, I will live in them and move among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people”. The church is constituted of God’s people. They belong to him and he belongs to them (Erickson 1983:1035). God took the initiative in choosing them. He chose them from the beginning to be saved (2Th.2:13-14). The Old Testament concept is broadened to include both Jews and Gentiles within the Church.

God has redeemed Israel and they are his people. In Hosea 2:23b, God says, “I will say to those called ‘Not my people’, ‘You are my people’; and they will say,

‘You are my God’.” Paul applies this statement to God’s taking in of Gentiles as well as Jews (Rom.9:24-26). The Church, consisting of both Jews and Gentiles, are a redeemed people. They have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb (Rev.5:9).

This people are now not identified by the external sign of circumcision of the flesh, but by the inward sign of the circumcision of the heart (Rom.2:29 and Phil.3:3). The people of God are a people marked by holiness. This applies to both Old and New Testament contexts. Evangelicals are not agreed on whether the Church replaces Israel as the People of God or not. This debate has no impact on our present discussion.

ii). Body of Christ.

The Body of Christ is perhaps the most extended image of the Church. Berkhof (1953:557) regards this as a complete definition of the Church. The Body of Christ is the locus of Christ’s activity. Believers are individually members of the Body, which is a unity of all the members (1Co.12:27). Salvation in all its complexity is in large part a result of union with Christ (Erickson 1983:1036). Christ is the head of the Body. It is perhaps better to say that he is head over the Body (Col.1:18), rather than a part of the Body. The whole Body belongs to him (Pereira & Dennison 2003:1).

Believers united with Christ, are being nourished through him by all who are connected to him. The believers are all members of one another (Rom.12:5) and they are all interconnected through Jesus Christ. All the members of the body, though many, are one body (1Co.12:12). This concept fosters also the understanding of mutuality, in that the body’s members are able to build up one another and enjoy genuine fellowship. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together (1Co.12:26).

The Body is unified and universal, characterized as “...one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one

faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all” (Eph.4:4-6). Its universality is best demonstrated in Colossians 3:11, “Here there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all, and in all”. The Church is not limited to Israel; it has no racial, language, economic and social boundaries. Its aim is to draw in the whole world by means of evangelism, and every believer is expected to be involved in evangelism.

iii). Temple of the Holy Spirit.

The Temple is undoubtedly an Old Testament concept applied to the Church. We are all, Jews and Gentiles, baptized through one Spirit into the Body of Christ (1Co.12:13). Paul’s Trinitarian concept of the Church is the picture of the Church as the Temple of the Spirit (Erickson 1983:1039). At Pentecost the Holy Spirit gave birth to the Church. The Holy Spirit continued to populate the Church in the Name of Jesus Christ. The Church is indwelt by the Spirit, both as individuals and as a corporate entity. We are all, collectively, the Temple of the Holy Spirit (1Co.3:16-17). In Ephesians 2:21-22 we understand the Trinitarian identity of the Temple. “In him (*Christ*) the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord (*Christ*). And in him (*Christ*) you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God (*Father*) lives by his *Spirit*.” (Italics mine).

The Spirit, being one, also produces a unity within the Body. The members are called upon to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph.4:3). The Holy Spirit also makes the believers attuned to the leading and will of the Lord. While he attunes us to the sovereignty of God, his own sovereignty is expressed with the dispensing of the gifts for the edification of the Church (Heyns 1980:81). The Holy Spirit also makes the Church holy and pure as they are sanctified under the new covenant because they are the Temple of the Holy Spirit (1Co.6:19-20).

It is perhaps necessary to bring up the issue of *kingdom* and *priesthood* here. We follow Ladd (1964:259f) when he defines the Kingdom of God as the reign of God. While one of the problems is defining the Church in terms of the Kingdom, we may

come to the conclusion that the Church is part of the Kingdom of God (Mt.16:18 cf. Mt.18:18). The Church realizes the Kingdom of God. The Church extends the Kingdom in that it is a witness to the Kingdom, so expanding the reign of God. Thus the Kingdom was present in heaven before people were created or became subjects. The Church is only one manifestation of the Kingdom, and will be its eschatological people. Heyns (1980:79) coins a useful term when he calls the Church a “*basileological*” community.

Finally, Christian believers are collectively called *a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that they may declare the praises of him who called them out of darkness into his wonderful light* (1Pt.2:9). Blum (1981:231) states that this does not mean that the Church is Israel or even that the Church replaces Israel in the plan of God. Any way, he has chosen to replicate what was true about Israel now in the Church. This replication, for us, is an important connection between the then (of Exodus) and the now (of the Church). The priesthood and temple motifs are bound together, as it is also kept together in the ministry of Christ (Heb. 7 -10).

In reference to the local church, we understand that it is the only form that can interact as the church with the world. It is here that we must live out our identity as God’s people, as Christ’s body and as the Holy Spirit’s temple. These three terms must be expressive of our relationship with the Trinity. This expression is in fact our witness of what God has done *for us, in us, and through us*; all for the world to behold. The local church is the visible community that can demonstrate any sort of socio-ethical expression. Thus, the socio-ethical principles of the Church are derived from the spiritual concepts of the universal body, while the socio-ethical expressions are practiced in and through the local body.

iv). Demonstrating the Theology of the Exodus Presence Principles in Evangelical Ecclesiology and in Evangelism.

We are simply asking how the theology of Presence in Exodus correlates with Evangelical Ecclesiology. By correlation we are trying to see how that theology

reasonably enhances our understanding of Evangelical Ecclesiology in the areas of revelation, redemption and relationship. Revelation will have reference to the Trinity. The New Testament concept of redemption is connected with the understanding of salvation. By relationship we have in mind that between the Church and the Trinitarian God, that within the Church itself, and that between the Church and the world.

1. *Revelation* is an initiative of God. We cannot know anything about God unless he reveals himself. The highest disclosure of God ever, is found in Jesus Christ. Jesus is the incarnation of God, who has *come down* as Yahweh has done when he had seen and heard Israel's cry in Exodus 3:7-8. The holiness of God was communicated with sinful man when we beheld his glory full of grace and truth (Jn.1:14). The destructive character of holiness was now tempered with grace.

The revelation of Jesus Christ was not the first revelation of God to his people. God is the God of their history. There is continuity with that history. The continuity found in Jesus, like with the exodus, is with the promises about his coming (Johnson & Webber 1989:232). The God, who in earlier times spoke through the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us through his Son (Heb.1:1-2), the creator-redeemer. God will always remember his covenant promises and seeks always to bring about a new creation (2Co.5:17). It pleased the sovereign Lord that in Christ should all the fullness of God reside (Col.1:19) and through him, to provide redemption.

There were moments when the divine self-disclosure caused a stir in the created order (cf. Ex.19) when God spoke. When Jesus disclosed his glory, and others asked, "What kind of man is this that, even, the winds and the waves obey his voice?" (Lk.8:25). The speaking of Jesus was the speaking of one with authority. Following our observation on page 64 above, Yahweh revealed his name, *I will be who I will be*, and thereby making himself approachable and knowable, gave men hope in the seven *I will* utterances (Ex.5:22-6:13). There must be correlation with the seven *I am* statements of Jesus in John's gospel, when he said *I am the Bread of Life* (6:35), ... *the Light of the world* (8:12), ... *the Door* (10:7), ... *the Good Shepherd* (10:11), ... *the Resurrection and the Life* (11:25), ... *the Way the Truth*

and the Life (14:6), and ... *the True Vine* (15:1). At the center of all these statements was Christ's statement, "Before Abraham was I am". Participants in his Name are participants in his deity because he is the divine presence and revelation in history (Beasley-Murray 1999:139).

From the point of view of Yahweh revealing and sharing his power with Moses for the purposes of affecting redemption, we can say that the gift of the Holy Spirit was given for this very same reason to all believers. Jesus said: *you will receive power after the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you will be my witnesses ... in spreading the Gospel of redemption* (Acts 1:8). As with Moses, the believers' inadequacies for the task are met with the sufficiency of the Lord's presence with them; *and surely I am with you always...* (Mt. 28:20).

Evangelicals understand the whole Trinity as their "Divine Warrior" in their task of spreading the news of redemption. They recognize that their fight is not against flesh and blood, but against the forces of darkness and un-creation (Eph.6:12). They step forward by the power of God's Spirit in Jesus Christ. If God is for us, who can be against us? (Rom.8:31). All things work together for good to those who love the Lord, and who are the called according to his purpose (Rom.8:28). None of the powers of evil in the world can stop Israel's redeemer and the Church's redeemer.

As with Israel, so too with the Church; Presence marks their identity. We have already developed this fact under the idea of the Church as the Temple of the Holy Spirit. In Ephesians 2:21-22 we understand the Trinitarian identity of the Temple. "In him (*Christ*) the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord (*Christ*). And in him (*Christ*) you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God (*Father*) lives by his *Spirit*." The presence of God confirms the participation of the believer in the god-head. Peter speaks of believers as partakers of the divine nature (2Pt.1:4). This nature helps them to escape the corruption of the world (Swindoll 1979:14). In fact, the re-creation within the redemptive activity of the Church will culminate in them being like Jesus, for they shall see him as he is (1Jn.3:2).

2. *Redemption* is also God's initiative. Man is unable to save himself. Salvation comes, not by man's efforts or merits, it is a gift of God (Eph.2:8-9). Redemption confirms the people of God. The purpose of God in their new creation is that the people of God should be holy as he is holy (Packer 1992:135). Because redemption is predicated by the idea that the world can be changed, redemption is the beginning of that process of change through regeneration and sanctification until glorification (Rom.8:29-30). Sanctification is transforming into Christ-likeness through the Spirit (2Co.3:18). The people of redemption, are the people of Presence; a people changing into the likeness of that Presence through a process of becoming holy. This is true of the Church.

As God required a mediator in the person of Moses to affect redemption, so God chose the Mediator for the Church to be his Son. The Son is the only mediator between God and man that can affect redemption, because he gave himself as a ransom for sinners (1Tim.2:5-6). Like Moses was rejected at first, so Christ, rejected by the Jews, is the one approved of God to be the deliverer (Acts 7:36). His redemption leads to a new creation (Fretheim 2003:250). Paul says by inspiration: *Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation* (Gal.6:15). Also, *if any man is in Christ, he is a new creation* (2Co.5:17).

The redeemed are to become instruments of redemption. God desires to use his people in this way. Israel was to be priests to the nations. Believers of the Church are to be instruments of Christ's project of building his Church by sharing his gospel. As Pharaoh's war machine was rendered useless in its attempt to frustrate God's redemption act; so too *the gates of hell*, which is Satan and his cohorts, will not prevail in Christ's activity of building his Church - Mt.18:18 (Carson 1984:370). The people of Christ have now assumed the identity intended for Israel; they are *a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God*, so that they *may declare the praises of him who called them out of darkness into his wonderful light* (1Pt.2:9).

It must be said that while every redemptive act of God, whether from slavery or from exile, happened according to the pattern of the exodus, none of it was the ultimate act of redemption. The redemption of Jesus Christ was the ultimate act of redemption. Jesus is greater than Moses; he is greater than Joshua, because he alone provides the kind of redemption that provides a complete Sabbath rest (Heb.4:3) and a complete victory (Rev.15:2-3). The idea of *rest* is the creation idea of completion (Guthrie 1990:113).

3. *Relationship* is also God's initiative. He made the first move towards man. He started a relationship with Abraham, giving him promises that were to apply to Israel and to the Church. Christ became a curse so that the Church may inherit a blessing. Paul says about the Church: "He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit" (Gal.3:14), and "If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal.3:28f). The Church has significance in history (Stott 1991:101).

Yahweh has chosen Israel out of all the nations of the earth, so that he can show his goodness towards them. They were not chosen by any merit of their own, but by God's grace. The man of faith adapts himself to the revelation of God's grace (Chafer 1980:10). The same applies to people in the Church. They are saved by grace and not by works. Election is about God's faithfulness to his promises through Abraham to Christ. As election alludes to Israel's vocation (Ex.19:5-6), so does it allude to the Church's vocation (1Pt.2:9). Its vocation is to be a testimony of God's goodness to his people, and of God's greatness in facilitating that goodness.

God's people can partner with God in his reaching the world with that message. The Church has a particular responsibility in evangelizing and making disciples. As God empowered Moses, so he did the Church through the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit empowers them in the area of *revelation* (the Word) – he will guide them into all truth (Jn.16:13); *redemption* (evangelization) – preaching with a demonstration of the Spirit's power (1Co.2:4); and *relationship* (unity and love) –

keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace ... until we reach the whole measure of the fullness of Christ (Eph.4:3, 13).

Finally, as Israel was to be a model to the nations of the world; so too, the Church is to serve as a model community to others. Because the Israelites came from slavery, they were forbidden to ill-treat others. They were to reflect the values of creation. The Church as the new creation is to shine as lights, so that all could see their good works and glorify God (Mt.5:16). They must be a community of love and equity. They are an egalitarian and healing community, inviting to all regardless of race, social standing, gender and economic status. In the next chapter we shall discuss the behavior of the redeemed community as a community of the Presence.

The whole Christian existence is predicated by a God who chose to reveal himself. We could never understand the love of God unless he was willing to demonstrate it by his presence and power on our behalf. His presence and power on our behalf were nothing but fulfillment of his promises to us. The God, who spoke to the forefathers through the prophets, chose to personally speak to us through his Son (Heb.1:1-2). His personal presence was a *coming down* (c.f. Ex.3:8) to intervene and rescue with power, such as never been seen before. Death was conquered.

There is another marvel; almost equal to the awesomeness of God's coming in the person of his Son, namely the willingness of God to partner with inadequate messengers to bring about such a great salvation message to lost humanity. Its greatness is in the magnanimity of God to include weak and, sometimes, unwilling humanity in his awesome agenda for the nations, and in the building of his Church. Our inadequacies unleash the creative power of God and we are clothed with power beyond our understanding, causing men and women to be redeemed and created anew. Our words are able to demonstrate power even greater than the staff of Moses. Every changed life is a miracle no less than the opening sea or the pillar of cloud and fire. Every response of faith is to put man in relationship with the eternal God.

While we do not posit a liberation theology such as was held by Latin American liberation theologians, we do not want to limit the scope of redemption to merely spiritual dimensions. André (1985:9) voices our opinion when he said, “The church’s mandate extends beyond the preaching of the gospel of personal salvation (seen in spiritual terms only) and includes temporal affairs such as justice and morality in society”. Redemption, and therefore the Gospel, must also have implications for community. Just as Israel related as the people of God, so the Church must reflect the marks of redemption as an egalitarian and an empowering existence in community. Presence and redemption must bring about such a relationship. The Church as an inviting community of equality and empowerment is a powerful tool for evangelism on the one hand, and for emulation on the other.

The grandeur of sinners becoming part of a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation and a peculiar people, showing the praises of a Savior who called them out of darkness into his marvelous light (1Pt.2:9 *c.f.* Ex.19:5-6), is beyond human comprehension. These sinners are now God’s people. They are in a relationship with the holy God. And not only with him, but with all those who are redemptive-ly related to God. They are witnesses of his redemptive power. They are partakers together of a new life; of the resurrection life of the Lord of lords. In Christ they are all partakers of the revelation, redemption and relationship.

CHAPTER 4.

PROPOSING A SOCIO-ETHICAL UNDERSTANDING FOR THE REDEEMED TODAY.

We have shown that there is a strong link between Israel as the people of God, and the Church as the people of God. The Church, though spiritually connected, is given the same historical roots as the Israelites, in that they too are of the seed of Abraham. All who are in Christ are of Abraham's seed (Gal.3:27f). Like Israel, the Church, whose Passover Lamb is Christ (1Co.5:7), is a community redeemed. They are a community of individuals who have trusted God and have been saved by faith. They are a community of the Presence, not in some theophanic way as with the Israelites, but as the Temple of the Holy Spirit, being the dwelling place of God here on earth. Their relationship to God and to one another is the principle of their socio-ethical expression.

As we have said, the local church is the only form that can interact as a community in and with the world. It is here that we must live out our identity as God's people, as Christ's body and as the Holy Spirit's temple. These three terms must become the expression of our socio-ethical relationship with respect to the Trinity, the Church and the world. This expression is in fact our witness of what God has done *for us, in us, and through us* for the entire world to behold. The local church is the visible community that can demonstrate any sort of socio-ethical expression. Thus, while the local church's identity is derived from the universal body, this identity must practically express itself religiously and socio-ethically through the local body.

The Church as a divine creation, though made up of imperfect human beings, is called to display the spiritual qualities of their Lord (Erickson 1983:1049). It exists to carry out the will of the Lord by the power of the Holy Spirit. In this way the Church is the instrument and the custodian of the Kingdom of God. In the world, the Kingdom expresses itself in a spiritual relationship of holiness with God and in a socio-ethical relationship with other humans. Evangelism must therefore, of

necessity, be of both spiritual and socio-ethical dimensions in its endeavor to expand the Kingdom of God. Our interest is therefore in the socio-ethical integration of life among the redeemed.

With social and ethical categories derived purely from Israel's responses in the Exodus narrative as paradigmatic for contemporary principles, we shall follow a generally paradigm-then-principles approach in the following section of our discussion. The socio-ethical principles will be expressed in general terms. In our utilization of the Covenantal aspects of Israel's self-understanding, we mean to refer only to the general idea of the word that includes both Abrahamic and Sinaitic aspects. We realize that these two covenants are not interchangeable, but we believe that the latter is subsumed by the former. The general principles will then be applied in order to propose a socio-ethical understanding for the contemporary redeemed within an Evangelical Ecclesiology.

4A. A Socio-ethical Integration of the Exodus Redemptive Pericopes and its Principles for Our Contemporary Context.

Israel as a nation came from one family. Their historical roots are found in Abraham, whom God promised to give as many offspring as the stars in the sky or as the sand on the seashore. The promise was confirmed to Abraham's grandson, Jacob, whom God re-named Israel, the name this nation inherited for itself. They were also commonly referred to as the sons of Jacob or the sons of Israel, or simply Israel(ites). Their common descent already gave them a common identity so that we may legitimately speak of them as a community.

As a people in relation to other people (e.g. Egypt), Israel must also have the right to bargain and negotiate. In this case it causes an enormously serious confrontation where the stakes are high. The very future of Israel rests on the outcome of these transactions. Pharaoh's future is also at stake. The two governing formulas "Let my people go" and "You shall know I am Yahweh" together join the social and theological issues in the same way as does the basic covenant

formula “I will be your God and you shall be my people”. The imperative of freedom and the indicative of sovereignty cannot be separated in the faith of Israel. (Breuggemann 1994:723). At first Yahweh is absent from the confrontation, leaving Moses to negotiate. Nevertheless, Yahweh is committed to social transformation. Egypt could partner with Yahweh, but instead they chose to oppose Moses until Yahweh entered the confrontation, which led to their destruction.

The socio-ethical significance of the redemption texts of Exodus is crystallized under the following headings that naturally flow from it. The headings emanate from Israel’s responses as a community within the narrative itself, and as we have applied its theological reflections from the previous chapter. Even their future ethical responses as a nation draw on the narrative of this first redeemed community. The social categories, as well as the ethical categories derive from the narrative itself. The headings which flow naturally from these redemption narratives, we believe, can be used as principles for our present situation too. The motivations for future ethical responses in the rest of the Old Testament are obviously those which only allude to the Exodus narrative of redemption.

- i. Israel’s Self-Consciousness as a Community.
- ii. Yahweh’s Presence and the Community’s Redemption.
- iii. Yahweh’s Agent in the Redemption of the Community.
- iv. Counter Forces to the Creation of the Redeemed Community.
- v. Covenant and Redemption Undergirds Social Identity.
- vi. The Socio-ethical Response of the Redeemed Community.
- vii. Redemption as Social Dialogue.
- viii. Covenant as Societal Establishment.
- ix. Covenant and Societal Conflict.
- x. Covenant and Societal Self-consciousness.

i). Israel’s Self-Consciousness as a Community.

The word ‘community’ usually refers to a group of people living together in one locality who inhabit a culture of shared values (McCloughry 1995:108). Israel had

an identity as a group. Furthermore, they were a group of interdependent people with some form of leadership structure by the time Moses came on the scene. The Elders of the people acted as their leaders (Ex.3:16, 18, 4:29, 12:21). The leaders play a significant role in the narrative of Exodus. They were a well-known institution in that society. It was not their role to frame legislation or establish legal precedents, but to administer the agreed standards of the community and to arbitrate in disputes among the Israelites. By accepting the authority and judgments of the elders society could live harmoniously (Mackay 2001:79).

As in other societies, the structures that promote the cohesion and solidarity needed among the Israelites were evidently in place. They must have developed some sense of distinguishing themselves from their overlords; when the plagues so clearly discriminated against the Egyptians (Ex.8:23; 9:4, 26; 10:23). Moreover, they were able to organize themselves. That ability was demonstrated when the Israelites left Egypt marching in their groups of fifties (Ex.13:18). Finally, as a community they all went united through the divided waters (Ex.14:21f). That being the case, allows us also to assume that there must have been experiences, norms and values that kept them together and provided the cement for some sort of ongoing corporate identity. Later the Law given at Sinai would formally become that common norm.

It cannot be assumed that that commonality only came about when they were given the Law. Their very redemption distinguished them as a community which was bounded by the favor of Yahweh. The plagues that came upon their oppressors did not even touch them. Their dwelling places were spared the ugliness of the plagues because Yahweh kept it away from them and their animals (Ex. 8:22-23; 9:4, 7; 9:26; 10:23; 11:7). The people were unified by their preparations for the first Passover. They were united in their households. They were united in their neighborhoods. They were united as a people among the Egyptians, and were distinct from them. They were united in their marching out. They must have recognized that they were distinguished and favored as a community.

For Israel the idea of community had theological importance. They were the people of their God (e.g. Ex.3:7). They were favored by their God from before they entered Egypt. Their self-understanding included the concept that Abraham's God was their God (Gen.17:7). While most other communities focused on the two aspects of justice and economy in their quest for societal harmony, Israel also had the unifying self-understanding that they belonged to the invisible and sovereign God. The promises to the patriarchs were extended to them. Those promises defined the nature of their relationship with God and the nature of the community's existence. Yahweh was the God of their fathers and of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Ex.3:6, 15, 16, etc.). The promise-making God was indeed also a promise-keeping God. Divine promise distinguished them as a special people.

They had a historical relationship with God. The inter-generational aspect of that relationship was clearly understood and accepted. Yahweh spoke of himself as the God of their fathers (Ex.3:13, 15, 16 and 4:5). He is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Ex.3:6, 15, 16 and 4:5). He appeared to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as God Almighty (Ex.6:3). God swore to give the land he promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Ex.6:8). Finally, the historical inter-generational relationship is tangibly demonstrated by the act of them taking Joseph's bones out of Egypt with them to their own land. There was a historical continuity that guaranteed their future too. God's remembrance of the past brought about their redemption and provision in the future. Community cannot only consider the "now" generation. It must have a history of past generations, and it must think of future generations too.

Israelite nationhood was part of their self-understanding, even though two major aspects were lacking, namely, self-determination and own land. Their nationhood still needed to be formalized along the lines of the promise God made to Abraham (posterity, relationship and land). The narrative of Exodus actually sets out to do just that. The book begins by noting the prolific growth in their numbers. The relationship will be confirmed at Sinai, and the movement in Exodus is away from Egypt towards the land God swore to give to their fathers. Yet, it must not be taken that Israel did not already consider themselves a nation before the fulfillment of the

land promise. They understood that they were a nation merely on the basis of the divine act of redemption.

There was also a negative or counter-self-understanding, which was taken on from what became the master-symbol (Jordaan 1984:751f) of their identity to the Egyptians, namely that of 'slaves'. They accepted the status quo by assuming that symbol. They became comfortable with it to the point of rejecting possible redemption from it. They wanted to stay in Egypt and continue to serve the Egyptians (Ex. 14:12). This was for some of them a better option than redemption. Yet, in this counter experience, the community became productive and resourceful. According to Breuggemann (1994:685) they were a society where the question of liberation was little honored. As long as they accepted the status quo and saw themselves as belonging to Pharaoh, they were unable to realize their destiny; the reality of belonging to the invisible and present God. Belonging to the invisible and present God could only be realized by redemption.

Another counter-self-understanding derived from the fact that they knew themselves as victims of the tyranny of the ancient world's greatest contemporary political-military-economic power. They were never allowed military arms or knowledge of how to use them, even though God had just organized them as his army. (Stuart 2006:320). In fact, they were never going to be used in this way against the Egyptians. Their victim-mentality blinded them to the loving and beneficent intentions of Yahweh. Their continual complaining betrayed their distrust of Moses and Yahweh. A new society who was able to operate by faith and a new identity was Yahweh's intention. It was only on the other side of the Red Sea that they finally believed in Yahweh and in his servant, Moses (Ex.14:31).

They needed to be freed from Pharaoh's oppressive regime in order to respond to God's gracious regime. It was God's own will to end the bondage status of his people, and he relentlessly pursued it so that it could not finally be resisted. The irresistible action of divine grace evoked the corresponding human response of gratitude (Webster 1995:4). The reciprocal nature of the relationship was clearly confirmed in the covenantal statement, "I will be their God and they shall be my

people” (Ex.6:7). They will speak of Yahweh as “the God of the Hebrews” (Ex.3:18). This reciprocity encouraged a community of mutuality. This mutuality is weakly demonstrated in the caring mentality of a disenfranchised leadership (Ex.5:19-21); also, when Moses, as “redeemer”, acted on behalf of the Israelite against the Egyptian (Ex.2:11-14). Mutuality was there, and it was growing.

Their envisaged destiny showed that one important thing was lacking from both their self-understanding and their master-symbols, namely the presence of God with them. They needed to see themselves as a community in and with Yahweh’s presence. The Egyptians on the other hand needed to understand that Yahweh was with the Israelites, and for them. The divine presence could, and had to, characterize them as a distinctive people. This would become their distinctive characteristic because it demanded a particular and appropriate response from them. Our question is; *how did the presence of God in the Exodus narratives influence the Israelite community’s socio-ethical interaction?* For now this question must be investigated with reference to the Exodus redemption narratives.

While we agree with Nürnberger (1993:1), that the root of all authentic theology is soteriology, we cannot agree that it begins with human need. It must begin with God. He covenanted with their great forefather before there was a need. Besides, God was willing to show his grace to those who breached his standard. The divine intention was and is, first of all, for him to reveal himself. He revealed himself as “I Am” or “I Will Be” (Ex.3:14). Among all the many shades of meaning of that phrase, its preeminent meaning is a *relational* one. By this name, Yahweh makes it understood that he was a covenant-keeping God, who did not change and who was faithfully for them.

It is because of who He was to this people that the redemptive intention of God was the well-being of his people in all aspects of their individual and communal existence, and in the context of the well-being of their social and natural environments. He saw their plight in Egypt; he heard their cry; he knew their sorrows and was willing to come down to redeem them (Ex. 3:7-8). Their right to such an existence was always to be challenged, and God was ever willing to

intervene in that case. His intervention started by his self-revelation. His redemptive intention was an expression and a result of his self-disclosure. Actually, his redemptive intention was to become the vehicle of his self-disclosure; both to Israel and beyond.

Redemption demonstrated the fact that God's people had great value in his sight. Redemption was the deliverance from the power of an alien dominion and the enjoyment of freedom that resulted from it. Redemption presupposed slavery. The entire nation of Israel had been under the bondage of slavery in Egypt. The Exodus story starts with the redemption of the firstborn of each Israelite, because Israel itself was the Lord's firstborn son (Ex.4:22). Because Israel was a people of great value God was willing to make the stakes high for their freedom. In fact they were a people whose divine election was already in place at the start of this narrative (Fretheim 1991:59).

Breuggemann (1994:680) eloquently describes Israel as a community like none that had yet been – the recipient of God's liberating power, practitioner of God's sovereign Law, partner in God's ongoing covenant, and host of God's awesome presence. This astonishingly odd community was, of course, made possible only by the incomparable God who dared to impinge upon the human process in extravagant and unprecedented ways. He is correct in saying that a canonical reading of Exodus must take seriously a socio-critical reading (p.683). Yahweh's resolve was not just that of a political sovereign, but was also the passion of a parent who would see to the honor and well-being of the beloved heir and firstborn. Thus the great political issue of Exodus is given familial intensity. The most intimate demonstration of community is in the context of family. Actually, they were the "sons of Jacob", the family of Jacob; the firstborn of God and the family of God. They were God's own people, and Pharaoh was given the political mandate to let Yahweh's people go, for he had the political power to let them go.

God's redemptive action was intended for Israel to recognize her own identity and mission in the world. God's action for Israel was not just their motivation for obedience, but also their model for it. Obedience was 'walking in the way of the

Lord', which was expressed in the motive of imitation and in the motive of gratitude (Wright 1995:53). The inter-relatedness of society within the Israelite community therefore also served as the momentum for carrying forward their identity and mission. They had the identity of godly mutuality and a mission emanating from a godly responsibility (Bridger 1995:27). Godly mutuality must be derived from the fact that they were all redeemed. They all walked through the sea on dry ground. They all saw what God had done to the Egyptian war machine. They belonged together because they were redeemed together from a common oppressor. The miraculous intervention of Yahweh was for their common benefit. Such commonality had to give them a sense of being a community; a redeemed community.

Principles:

Israel's consciousness as a redeemed community leaves us with some valuable principles. The first is that every community is made up of people who have a sense of belonging. Community loyalty is derived mainly from that sense. The question remains; how is a sense of belonging encouraged or inculcated? Israel's sense of community was derived from a shared history, shared experience, shared beliefs, values and norms.

The point that history makes for community loyalty is undeniable. Israel's shared history was of the most intimate variety in that the nation all found in Abraham their common ancestor. The story of that family is also the story of the nation. Principally, the only thing we can do about our history is an endeavor to build one together by being united in our vision for the community. We too need to visualize our future, and thereby the building of our history. It is in the building of a history together that experiences are shared, so inculcating a sense of community.

Shared beliefs, values and norms are necessary for community. Without these one cannot expect cohesion and solidarity. Much of this depends on both individual and corporate resolve. Resolve to be united in identity and purpose.

Secondly, faith in God is good for community stability and confidence. Israel's shared identity was encouraged by their sense of being valuable in God's sight. They were God's people. How God esteemed them made them understand that they were favored and special as a community. This understanding was entrenched by a monotheistic belief; if the only and sovereign God was for them, then who can be against them? He was able to save them. He would be faithfully present with them; even beyond any temporal difficulty.

Thirdly, the answers to Israel's lack of self-determination, geographic sovereignty, a paralyzing victim-mentality, and a bondage-stature could only be found in Presence and redemption. Redemption is a source to become productive and resourceful. Redemption seeks to free and to empower.

Lastly, a viable community will organize itself. They will discover their interdependency and need for mutuality. They will devise some sort of leadership structure that will facilitate a caring, cohesive and harmonious co-existence. Solidarity will guarantee mutuality, cohesion and harmony.

ii). Yahweh's Presence and the Community's Redemption.

Even though we cannot yet speak of the ethical interaction of the Israelites before redemption, we can speak of the motivation of that redemption for ethical interaction. The presence of God must have had an influence on the ethical interaction at and after their redemption. We need to explore the extent of such a motivation and of such an influence on their ethical interaction.

We have already shown that the divine holy intentionality was to reveal who Yahweh was; both to Israel and to the Egyptians. This he would do through the redemptive action, and thereby reveal himself also to the other nations. The divine self-disclosure was to provide the Israelites the kind of confidence they needed to embark on the journey to their nationhood and towards their distinctive identity as the people of God. The Egyptians on the other hand needed to know that Yahweh

was sovereign over all things for the benefit of his people. Yahweh's self-disclosure was best exemplified through his personal presence with his people and for his people.

In the first place, God saw their plight and heard their cry and responded by "coming down" (Ex.3:7-8) to rescue the Israelites. The presence of Yahweh was an expression of his identification with the people in their misery. God is depicted as one who was intimately participating in the suffering of the people; he entered into their sufferings and made it his own. Israel was to engage in an internal relationship with those who suffer. Israel was not to be like Egypt, but was to identify with the suffering people all over and all the time. God's compassionate activity became a paradigm for Israel; it was life to be lived in imitation of their God.

By mentioning his name to Moses, Yahweh opened the agenda that he had for the rescue of the Israelites. That agenda was connected to the past; with their ancestors, and was reaching into their future mission as recipients of Yahweh's grace. God's gracious presence was bestowed with the purpose of sanctifying and transforming this nation into an instrument that displayed Yahweh's glory as an omnipotent, sovereign, holy and beneficent God. While the greatness of God could not be emulated, surely his goodness was to be imitated. They themselves needed to be holy and beneficent.

When Yahweh revealed his name, he was effectively saying, "I will" free you from your bondage or "I will" deliver you from the Egyptians or "I will" redeem you as a people for myself. Yahweh was the main mover in the whole process of Israel's liberation. We agree with MacKay (2001:77) when he says that the most appropriate explanation seems to be that which is said in the assertion, 'I will be with you'. The verb form "I am" is the same as "I will be". God was saying, "I will" be with you, and "I will" guide you, firstly to the place of worship (Sinai, where my redemption action will be confirmed), and secondly to your place of inheritance (the land I swore to your forefathers). The presence of God to liberate and to guide the Israelites was the beginning of their walking with him and in his ways. Observing

the way Yahweh led provided for them the paradigm by which they were to lead others, both within the community and those from outside.

God was yearning to be present with those he was to liberate, but that community required to be a community of faith and holiness for “hosting” the Holy. At first this yearning was met with Moses’ determined resistance rather than faith. Moses had no problem with the demand for holiness as he readily closed his face and took off his shoes in order to comply with the demand of divine presence. We cannot talk of holiness unless it is preceded by real and obedient faith. The giving of the covenant name of God was aimed at encouraging faith. Faith as a human gesture to the Holy becomes the prerequisite for redemption and transformation, but none of these can happen without the Holy’s gesture of Presence. Therefore, Presence and redemption must be the precursors of transformation. Meaningful transformation cannot happen without Presence and redemption.

Not only was the Presence an example of identification with the suffering, but it must also have provided the boldness to sensitize both the victims and perpetrators of suffering to the divine sympathy with the downtrodden. When finally Moses went to the elders of the people, his approach was opened with the statement that the God of the fathers “appeared to me” (3:16). The divine presence made Moses an authoritative representative to the people as well as to Pharaoh. Together with Moses the elders were to use the same authority when they were to appear before Pharaoh by saying to him that Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews “has met with us” (Ex.3:18). God’s presence provided both comfort and confidence in the context of oppression and in the confrontation of the oppressors.

Biblical faith is inevitably concerned with political questions, with a tilt towards justice. Salvation is the divine intention of all men. God will always side with the oppressed and against the oppressor inviting, as he had done with Pharaoh, the oppressor to participate in his agenda to liberate the oppressed. God was the defender of the weak. Pharaoh had the choice, whether to partner with or to oppose Yahweh. There was always a chance for repentance and for reparations to be made. When they chose to continue their oppressive labor policies and not to

be part of Yahweh's redemptive strategy, Egypt made themselves the objects of Yahweh's judgment instead.

The story played itself out using the 'mighty hand' motif; the hand of Pharaoh against the mighty hand of Yahweh. Pharaoh decided to oppress the people even more. Pharaoh's hand was the epitome of spite. The height of spiteful action was shown when he withheld the supply of straw from the Israelites' brick-making process, expecting the same production from them (Ex.5:18).

Breuggemann is correct in saying that liberation is slow, hard work. Pharaoh's increased injustice, stubbornness, and resistance to change, was allowed for the old order to give way to God's new intention (1994:729-730). The Israelites had to learn to sever their dependency upon Pharaoh. Moses also had to learn that if his people were to be the possession of Yahweh rather than of Pharaoh, there was to be a complete end to Pharaoh as a resource for them. The people needed to learn that God was their only resource, and the unreasonable-ness of Pharaoh furthered this discovery (Buttrick 1952:888). Salvation is ultimately out of the bound of human effort. Faith, therefore, serves as an encouragement to ethical behavior.

There was a dynamic move back and forth between the covenant commitment and Israel's present pain. The present was addressed with the past in mind. The promise of the past served as the guarantee of the future. Yahweh, on the basis of the past was to act in Israel's favor; to "free" them, to "deliver" them and to "redeem" them. God acted as a kinsman for the honor and well-being of a wounded or abused member of the family, thus bespeaking God's intimate solidarity as a member of the slave community. God's very presence and character is to make relationships, bring emancipation, and fulfill covenant promises.

From the start of the exodus, it becomes clear; Yahweh had orchestrated the entire sequence. He had so guided Israel as to avoid the inevitable but certainly lesser resistance of the coastal road, all the while tempting the Egyptians by an erratic and apparently self-defeating route into a pursuit he both suggested to them and impelled them to (Durham 1987:198). Because Yahweh led the Israelites they were

spared the discouragement and hardships envisioned by the coastal road. The God who displayed his power in the partial delivery through the Passover, also displayed his consideration towards their weakness and guided them away from hazards that would overwhelm them (Mackay 2001:244). The road he led them on was in fact more difficult for the Egyptians too. Yahweh's leading avoided a definite re-capturing of the Israelites. Good leadership chooses the way of lesser resistance, so avoiding the greatest loss or damage. Israel was spared any loss. Conversely, the road along which Yahweh led them provided the setting for the defeat of the Egyptians. God's leadership is thoughtful, prudent, and utterly reliable. When the threat of Pharaoh evoked a crisis of political leadership, Yahweh showed himself more than adequate to the task.

Finally, redemption and creation are firmly kept together. It is the sea crossing that lifted up the cosmic side of the divine activity, bringing God's creational goals to a climax. It was a cosmic victory. Without it, Passover was only a partial victory and Israel's liberation from anti-creation forces was only as far-reaching as the next major body of chaotic waters it encountered on its journey. (Fretheim 1991:153). But dry ground appeared in the midst of that chaos and created new possibilities for God to bring about redemption. Redemption created a liberated people who had the motivation to respond in socio-ethical ways in a new creation setting. The book of Exodus is indeed concerned with God's will for creation and with the destructive capacity of Pharaoh to undo creation. This text is urgent for the idea of a sustainable creation (Breuggemann 1994:684). Yahweh is able to dispatch all of creation for his redemptive concerns, which leads humanity to a new creation. Deliverance is from something to something. The historical goal of redemption must have a creational end.

Principles:

While God is eternal and therefore incomprehensible to humans, by revelation he discloses himself in ways that man can apprehend. The first principle we may derive under the present heading is that God has revealed those aspects about him that can be imitated. The Exodus context tells us that as God had, we can

identify with the suffering. God's goodness is always expressed in spite of human failure and underserved-ness. We must act in the present with the past and the future in mind. We have to act with prudence, looking to spare the community from discouragement and hardship.

The second principle is the converse of the first; we must not emulate the Egyptians in their anti-creation attitudes. Pharaoh abused his power in perpetuation of these attitudes. His actions towards his slaves were characterized by unreasonableness, spite, cruelty, exploitation and injustice. We should be compassionate, always defending the weak.

The third principle we can derive is that grace must have a purpose beyond itself. We are to show goodness in order to bring transformation. Grace is given for the purpose of sanctifying. Redemption must be aimed at a new creation. Salvation is aimed at ongoing justice. Redemption must create the confidence to embark on the road of development.

Fourthly, we should seek to make Presence our departure point. Presence provides comfort and confidence. Presence tilts towards justice. It provides the authoritative mandate to work towards emancipation and transformation. Hosting the Holy brings obedient faith and ethical behavior. It helps sever dependency on oppressive systems and looking to God as our ultimate resource.

iii). Yahweh's Agent in the Redemption of the Community.

Yahweh's leadership had socio-ethical implications for Israel. Moses was the appointed mediator-leader and agent of Yahweh's redemption activity. Moses was God's conduit for salvation to the people. God appeared to him thus making him both an approved and an authoritative leader of the people; appointed by God himself. He was given signs to authenticate his leadership and at the same time provided the people with the assurances they needed for this project. Redemption is a socio-ethical project for Israel, and requires the appropriate leadership.

The call of Moses happened under rather odd circumstances. He was a man in exile. His people were themselves considered to be in exile. He was therefore in exile from an exile. The people were held captive in a foreign land by a foreign, hostile, and oppressive power. Moses' call was initiated with an appearance of God. For Moses, God was present in the fire. This sight actually demonstrated that God was identifying with the exiled leader and with his exiled people, but the exiled leader needed to learn how to identify with his people.

First, Moses needed to understand Yahweh's agenda. Yahweh's redemptive heart had to be grasped. Moses needed to understand God's re-creative purposes. The revelation of God was aimed at setting things in proper perspective. Moses was invited to reflect upon the nature of vocation, and the power of "call" in the life of faith. An uncalled life is an autonomous existence in which there is no intrusion, disruption, or redefinition; an existence where there is no appearance or utterance of the Holy (Breuggemann 1994:719). The life of Moses was not autonomous and it was to be opened to summons for a higher service. Call has an unselfish purview on the side of the one called. Only as Moses accepted his call was he released from the selfish concerns of self-preservation. He was only then able to make sacrifices for God and for his people. He was now able to fit in with God's agenda.

Call requires obedience. A right sense of call, knowing its demands and the possibility of danger, must first understand Yahweh's agenda and purposes. Yahweh's intentions cannot be trivialized, distorted or domesticated. The call is serious business. A realization of its seriousness may tempt one to find excuses, as Moses did, but excuses only fail to recognize the adequacy of the one who is calling. The one calling promises to be present; it is an enabling presence that uses the one called to demonstrate the redemptive ability of the Creator himself. The call was thus able to reshape and re-define Moses' outlook and life. Divine call and human acceptance cooperated to bring about transformation in the community.

A minor implication of the excuses that Moses gave in the call-narrative must be recognized in the fact that God gave Moses all his faculties (Ex.4:11), inadequate as he understood them to be, and made them useful in his program of redemption (Ex.4:12). Moses doubted his own competence. Whether Moses had a speech impediment or had forgotten the Egyptian language (Chavalas 2003:574), he still was invited by Yahweh to be involved; he simply had to cooperate in order to bring about transformation; and at the same time be grateful for having what he had to offer. Moses' question of competence is answered simply with the assurance of divine presence; he was not to act alone. His personal inadequacies were not to be seen as an excuse for not doing well, and it was to be seen as the basis for showing tolerance of others' inadequacies.

With respect to Moses' commissioning, God's seeing led directly to Moses' sending. Moses was sent because God had seen. The commission of Moses was to take the people out of Egypt. His commission was not reform or to make life more bearable in Egypt; it was to remove them from the situation. He was to give Pharaoh the message "Let my people go". Moses had to become involved in the imperative of freedom by being a witness to Yahweh's will for social transformation. God's presence will be seen to have been effective and Moses would know that indeed it was God who stood behind the commission. This makes it clear that God chose Moses for activity in the socio-political arena; this was no ecclesiastical office (Fretheim 1991:61).

Moses' role also included that of mediation. He was the mediator between Yahweh and the people (often through the elders) and between Yahweh and Pharaoh. Moses was the one who had to demonstrate Yahweh's protest against abusive power. Pharaoh needed to be shown that he was abusing his power, and that he was ultimately accountable and subject to God. Moses became the point of conflict, and Pharaoh responded in three ways that denied any imperative for transformation. He sent Moses away; he denied any knowledge of Yahweh; and he intensified his abuses of the people of God. As mediator Moses had to be stubborn enough to oppose all three ways by exposing himself to the danger of imposing himself and Yahweh's imperatives upon Pharaoh. On the one hand mediation

required a stubborn resolve to end oppression; even in the face of personal danger. On the other hand Pharaoh and the people of Israel had to open themselves to recognize the mediator as one who was able to broker transformation. The recognition was already true of Yahweh who appointed Moses to be mediator. As there was divine acceptance so there had to be political and social acceptance too.

The mediation between Moses and the elders and supervisors helped to keep the question of justice alive. The supervisors as the persons in the middle between Moses and the people found themselves at a place where the immediate state of the people was most important. They lacked in their vision of a future possibility of freedom, but they were acutely aware of the immediate need for relief. They even stood against Moses because his intervention seemed to have caused the increase of their immediate plight. On the one hand they had the obligation to satisfy Pharaoh's demands because doing otherwise caused greater abuse, and on the other hand they needed some relief because Pharaoh was too demanding. It was the latter reason that gave Moses the foothold that he needed. He promised them both, relief and freedom. As mediator Moses had to keep his eye on both the present situation and on the future possibility.

Moses' leadership must be seen in relation to the people themselves. The people were often characterized by their grumbling. Their constant murmuring must have weighed heavily upon Moses. Their murmuring indicated that they were stuck in their rut of dependency upon Pharaoh. Israel had to forsake both Egyptian imprisonment and nourishment if they were to be the people of Yahweh (Hunt 2003:579). How did he respond to their murmuring? At first Moses brought the complaint to Yahweh (Ex.5:22f). Later Moses became instrumental in getting the people to look beyond the apparent difficulty and to trust in God (Ex.14:13f). Moses encouraged the people and pointed them to Yahweh's redeeming power. As a worthy agent of God in redemption he could not allow the people to be paralyzed by their fear; salvation always requires taking a step of faith. Moses was able to mobilize the people towards Yahweh's creative goal. The partnership between

Yahweh and Moses worked. He partnered with Yahweh to finally bring the people to the point where they revered Yahweh and trusted in him (Ex.14:31).

Breuggemann's comment summarizing the point, states that the entire operation intended by Yahweh brought the future to a political reality, and it also depended on his human agent. This human agent could doubt, question, challenge and refuse. Moses was not easily commandeered. God's resolve awaited human readiness. (1994:737). Moses was never forced into anything. God was willing to give Moses the kind of ability, power and authority that placed the people under obligation to acknowledge his leadership and to obey his instructions. This endowment ultimately opened Moses up to the possibility of becoming Yahweh's agent. As a leader he too needed affirmation, and these endowments provided just that. The people finally affirm Moses at the crossing.

Finally, as Yahweh's agent, Moses was to be regarded as God's instrument in creation as well as in redemption. When he stretched out his hand over the waters to cause a dry-ground path through the sea, Moses became a partner to the re-creative activity of God. The waters were separated and gathered in order to form dry land (cf. Gen. 1:9). This was continuous with the "let us make" of Gen.1:26, where creation was shown to be a dialogical act. The extension of dominion to the human in creation was here exemplified in a specific creative act. As in the opening up of the sea, so in the closing down of it, God worked in and through human and natural agencies. They were God's agents in creational judgment as much as in creational redemption (Fretheim 1991:159). Redemption was linked to judgment and Moses was Yahweh's partner in both. Re-creation and judgment are ethical imperatives. The Israelites were redeemed and the Egyptians were judged. The Egyptians were judged because they acted as a counter force to the creation of a new redeemed society.

Principles:

Leadership always has socio-ethical implications. The first principle is that the leader must be able to identify with his people because he understands their situation.

Secondly, the leader is always willing to surrender his autonomy and concerns of self-preservation for the sake of his people.

Thirdly, the leader must be able to see the big picture; he must understand the main agenda and purpose at hand. Call requires obedience to that agenda.

Fourthly, every leader must recognize his own limitations, yet not allow his inadequacies to paralyze his calling. He must display gratitude for what he has been blessed with as the tools available to him for his involvement in the imperative of freedom and social transformation.

Fifthly, like Moses, he must be prophetic and demonstrate Yahweh's protest against abusive power, being willing to expose himself to the danger of coming up against that power.

Sixthly, part of the ethical imperatives for leaders is to be able to be a motivator, not allowing the people to be paralyzed with fear or an inferiority complex. Encouraging hope is a redemptive outcome.

Finally, leaders must show readiness for the tasks of re-creation and judgment, knowing that these are ethical imperatives.

iv). Counter-forces to the Creation of the Redeemed Community.

The manifestations that negate the creation of community and redemption actually amplify the importance of a socio-ethical community. As darkness amplifies the

significance of light, so the counter-forces would amplify the significance of the forces of redemption. In the case of the Israelites, they were to appreciate their redemption more by recognizing the resistance that needed to be overcome in order to obtain it. Out of their appreciation their response would be unforced. An unforced and willing response was the kind of response that was most desired and lent itself to conscientious interaction, both religiously and ethically.

In this case the oppressive forces that confronted the people of God were directly of a social, political and economic nature. These may be spoken of as “structural sin” because it is sin expressed and embodied in social structures intentionally created and imposed (McGrath 1995:29). Egypt intentionally oppressed the Israelites because their growing numbers posed a threat to their own sovereignty. Redemption had to have a strongly political and social dimension. Yahweh was sovereign Lord, and his people deserved his beneficent intervention in their suffering. Pharaoh had to be deposed as the (perceived) sovereign, and the unjust treatment of the Israelites had to be put to an end.

While Yahweh depicted a life-supporting force, Pharaoh depicted a life-threatening force. This conflict between Yahweh and Pharaoh was to play itself out until finally, Yahweh would come out victorious. Yahweh’s victory would become Moses’ and Israel’s victory too. Israel had to welcome life-supporting measures. Egypt too was to allow the imperative of life-supporting measures. But victory for the life-supporting force must come through confrontation. Pharaoh’s stubbornness led them to openly confront Yahweh, but Yahweh was not going to be the passive victim; no, he actually manipulated Pharaoh into taking the aggressor-stance in this conflict. Besides, Pharaoh thought himself to be the sovereign world power; in open defiance against Yahweh. He would not acknowledge Yahweh, nor would he allow the Israelites an unthreatened existence as a community.

Moses’ first taste of Egypt’s frightfulness is anticipated when Yahweh disclosed that there was to be a match between the hand of Pharaoh and his mighty hand. Pharaoh was not going to give in until by God’s mighty hand he was forced to do so. Moses was asked what was in his hand; the staff - that which was his support

became the life-threatening force which must be subdued, even by dangerously grabbing it by the tail. Not only what was in Moses' hand, but his very hand itself God was able to turn leprous. Moses had to understand that both the structural and the personal might of Pharaoh were to be subdued.

The Egyptians were not to be thought of as innocent subjects of a king whose policy was at variance with their own thinking. Spiritually and ethically they were one (Mackay 2001:248). Egypt was culpable for the atrocities committed against its slaves. They ill-treated their slaves. They caused them to be burdened under the heavy demands of their licentious, materialistic, self-serving, self-indulgent and greedy appetite. Their severe oppression was in fact a form of state-practiced brutality. Their consumer mentality caused them to neglect their responsibility to human-beings. Conversely, Yahweh's economy always puts humans above things and prestige. Yahweh's redemptive action was an expression of his creative intention where humans had the highest value. In Yahweh's redemptive action Egypt was to be held accountable for being the way they were and for doing what they did.

The danger invited by Pharaoh's politics of oppression concerned not simply politics, but Pharaoh's own most intimate treasure, his crown prince. No one and nothing was safe that stood against Yahweh's resolve to act on behalf of this enslaved, oppressed people. Pharaoh, acting capriciously and denying any appeal from the people, opened himself up to the dangerous resolve of Yahweh. The level at which he meted out his brutality against defenseless slaves invited Yahweh's judgment against him and his people. In his commentary on the sea-crossing, Fretheim (1991:159-160) remarks, that while Egypt followed Israel's lead into the newly created possibilities of God's creative activity, their anti-creation intention disqualified them and opened them to inevitable judgment instead. The character of the human response shapes the nature of the participation in God's creative realities; either redemption or judgment. The Egyptians' anti-creation activity turned the creation against them and they suffered at its hands. Their military became bogged down in the effects of their own anti-creationism. God is the broker of, and the example of creationist and moral order.

For this very reason the Israelites were made aware of the issue of example. On the one hand they were not to treat others with the kind of treatment they have received from the Egyptians. They were not to be like the Egyptians. They were not to oppress others. They were to remember that they themselves were once slaves. On the other hand they were to follow the positive example of Yahweh, who cared for the oppressed and treated them with dignity. Yahweh always intervenes in order to transform a situation in which the oppressor seems in charge and the oppressed hopeless. God's activity became the paradigm for Israel; its life in relation to others was to be lived in imitation of God.

The Egyptian labor structure was oppressive to slaves. Not only did they apply the policy of forced-labor, but they neglected the basic right of slaves to be provided with the resources that enabled them to do their work. They acted unjustly by neglecting their obligation to render to their slaves what was a legitimate right (Wolterstorff 1995:16). They expected productivity while at the same time stifling it through their unrealistic expectation for the Israelites to provide their own straw. Worker exploitation and degrading working conditions must be excluded as a legitimate way of producing goods (Cramp 1995:119). The Egyptians did not realize that an important source of cheap labor was soon to be out of their reach. All they were doing was to create an even more fervent desire among the slaves to be freed from this rather unbearable situation. Yahweh was going to take the Egyptians' slaves away from them because they did not know how to treat their slaves.

Cruelty is the willful infliction of suffering (Hanson 1995:277). The Egyptians willfully inflicted suffering on the Israelites. They practiced their cruelty for political and economic purposes and made it part of their societal system. Yahweh condemned their cruel behavior and commanded them to set the Israelites free, or at least free to worship. Their actions were particularly reprehensible because their cruel actions were visited upon the weak and defenseless members of society. Their slaves were completely disenfranchised.

Bad enough was the fact of the cruel oppression of God's people, but the Egyptians did not even allow them the freedom of religion. Withholding that basic right would unavoidably breed dissatisfaction among the people; and even though the repressive policy of productivity was used as an off-set to this need, it would create a deeper resolve in the slaves' hearts to worship their God. In itself this was a proper demand for religious freedom. They wanted to worship their God in a way that honored him. According to Mackay (2001:81) Pharaoh regarded himself as a god, and therefore their request amounted to blasphemy. But Yahweh does not co-exist with other gods, for there is no other god but him. He wanted to be worshiped by his people, and when this was resisted by their overlords in favor of productivity, he saw that as an added reason to prepare redemption and judgment.

Finally, no wrong goes unpunished. Egypt was to make reparations for their exploitation of the Israelites. They would indeed do this when the people were to be liberated. Israel was promised that Yahweh would work in a way that was to cause the Egyptians to expel them. Each Israelite woman was to ask their Egyptian counterpart for items of gold, silver and clothing. In their desperation the Egyptians willingly and generously responded, and in this way the Israelites "plundered" the Egyptians (Ex.3:22). Plunder is taken by the victorious party in war. Israel was to anticipate victory over the Egyptians. The Israelites were ultimately to receive the rewards of their slave labor – the poor and the rich were to change positions; rather than being victims, they were to become victors and this was their booty.

Principles:

There is always resistance to renewal and redemption. The first principle we derive is that this resistance ultimately enhances the value and the appreciation of renewal and redemption.

The second principle is that people must rather be open to welcome life-supporting measures than life-threatening ones. They must be able to distinguish between the two.

Thirdly, those guilty of life-threatening measures will be culpable for their atrocities, especially those that are motivated by a consumerist mentality. The level of one's anti-measures will be meted out against the perpetrator. No wrong goes unpunished; like from Egypt reparations will be demanded.

Fourthly, humans had a higher value than things or status.

Fifthly, anti-creation intention always opens one to inevitable judgment because creation will eventually turn against him.

Sixthly, the religious act of worship is a right of every one, even slaves.

Finally, exploiting workers and degrading working conditions must be excluded in the legitimate way of producing goods. To practice exploitation for political and economic purposes is to entrench it in the social system. Withholding basic rights will unavoidably breed dissatisfaction and ultimate uprising.

v). Covenant and Redemption Undergirds Social Identity.

The social and the religious identity of Israel must be found in the essential covenant statement made for the first time in Exodus, namely, *I will take you as my own people and I will be your God. Then you shall know that I am Yahweh your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians* (6:7). Their religious identity can also be connected with their redemption. They are Yahweh's people and he will redeem them, and as his people they are to have a distinctive social identity which is best understood within the context of covenant. The covenant that gives promise requires fulfillment and the Presence for it to be meaningful.

Israel as Yahweh's own people and what that means is best understood under the double description of their identity which is distinct from all the peoples in the whole earth; as *a people redeemed* and as *a people of Yahweh*. Israel's willingness to

become these two things in relation to Yahweh will bring to pass what he has initiated for their benefit. Yahweh is willing to initiate a covenant with his redeemed people, and this covenant will later be expanded at Sinai, so that it enhances both their social and their theological identities, and which must work together with the Abrahamic Covenant as a witness to affect the nations of the world. This relationship has its historical foundation in the covenant between God and Abraham, and is developed in the Sinaitic covenant between Yahweh and Israel as a nation.

The Abrahamic covenant was mainly unconditional and universal, and moving in the direction of getting all the nations of the earth to be blessed. The Sinaitic covenant is conditional and national. This covenant is subordinated to the Abrahamic covenant and serves its agenda; to bring blessing to all the nations. The nation Israel was to be set before all the other nations as a model community; one having a covenant relationship with the only true God, Yahweh. As the covenant code indicates, God is not only served in the sacral realm, but in every aspect of the social fabric (Oosthuizen 1996:182). For now we refer to the Abrahamic Covenant as the covenant.

When Moses accused God of bringing trouble upon this people (Ex. 5:22) and of sending him on a hopeless mission, God called to remembrance his relationship with the patriarchs and that he appeared to Abraham, and to Isaac, and to Jacob (Ex. 6:3). These appearances, though as God Almighty and not as Yahweh, was in a covenanting context. Nevertheless, God established his covenant with them by seeing their plight. This was the covenant that was called to remembrance in the redeeming act of Yahweh (Ex. 6:6). Redemption is aimed at creating a people who know that Yahweh is God, that he rescued them and that he will fulfill his covenant with Abraham's offspring (Ex. 6:7-8). Their context as a people was therefore both theological (and thus ethical) and social in the divine intention.

Principles:

The first principle is derived from the fact that redemption and covenant together enhance social and theological identities. Theology provides the impetus for ethics. God is not only served in the sacral realm but also in the social realm.

The second principle tells us that one community can and should serve as a model to other communities.

vi). The Socio-ethical Response of the Redeemed Community.

Ethics are the rules of human behavior. It is the scholarly study of moral principles and moral behavior with reference to concrete situations (Deist 1984:56). Strictly speaking, morality pertains to the conduct of life, while ethics pertains to the principles behind such conduct. There is an inextricable bond between ethics and morality without necessarily being the same or one (Motlhabi 1998:120). In our discussion here we are concerned with both the principles as well as the conduct, but we agree that the conduct is derived from the principle. Since our context is monotheistic the consequences are far-reaching for a moral life because man is accountable to God for the whole of his life. We speak of monotheistic ethics when we are considering the effect of God's presence on human behavior.

The people of Israel were privileged to be both spectators and participants in this unfolding story. In fact they were at the centre of all the schemes and happenings, and even though they were not always aware of it, nor always understood it, they were invited to appreciate what Yahweh was doing on their behalf. Yahweh was to utilize his various agents for their benefit, whether those agents were protagonist (e.g. Moses), antagonist (e.g. Pharaoh) or neutral (e.g. elements of nature). There was to be no doubt about who was sovereign Lord for their allegiance to be well-directed. How was their allegiance to the sovereign Lord to be expressed?

It is obvious that Israel's allegiance was to be expressed in two directions; first to Yahweh and then to their fellow Israelites. Their allegiance to their fellow Israelites was in fact an expression of their allegiance to Yahweh. Their response was thus both religious and socio-ethical. The two cannot be separated because the first creates meaning, which in turn creates social interaction. In this case the interaction was "prescribed" by their common experience of redemption. Therefore we cannot entirely agree with Jordaan (1984: 678) when he says meanings are social products and they are formed whenever and wherever people are interacting. This is clearly not the only meaning for Israel. They had a vertical interaction and accountability too.

The people's two-fold response was exemplified in this telling statement after their redemption was brought about, "And Israel saw the great hand which Yahweh used against Egypt, and the people feared Yahweh, and they believed in Yahweh and his servant, Moses." (Ex.14:31). The NIV uses the word "trusted" where we have "believed". We may observe that there was a vertical element (towards Yahweh), and there was a horizontal element (towards Moses) in the people's response. These two responses must be more fully explored.

The first response to Yahweh was that of reverence. They were eye-witnesses of Yahweh's majesty and power. They experienced his personal guidance, protection and rescue. They saw him overthrow Pharaoh and his war machine. Unfortunately, they first had to see these things happen. Their reverence followed sight. Yes, for them "seeing was believing" which motif is demonstrated throughout this story (*c.f.* Ex.14:13, 30-31). The positive thing about their visual experience was that reverence was not only an individual response, but it was corporate too. All the people responded. Yahweh first had to demonstrate his power and in that way evoked a sense of awe, admiration, respect and gratitude in the hearts of his people. Their hearts filled with these attitudes translated into love for God and a commitment to walk in his ways. The "believing" of the Israelites was based on seeing a demonstration, not on propositions and concepts that are invisible or a God who is hidden (Sheriffs 2003:284).

A unified and vibrant religion emanating from real experiences is a powerful motivation for the creation of an accountable and conscientious community. The people's reverence was expressed in their faith and obedience towards Yahweh. The place for that expression must be within the community, and when it is, it serves as mutual encouragement to continue in the activities of faith and obedience. It is also common knowledge that mutuality makes for social harmony.

Faith is often expressed by verbs such as 'believe', 'trust' and even 'hope'. It is the leading biblical term that describes the relationship humans are to have with God. It expresses the orientation of the whole person, and is not merely intellectual assent, but confidence, trust and assurance of the graciousness of God (Okholm 1995:368). Faith is a response to God himself. Later on the content of Israel's faith was developed from their act of believing. Their act of believing looked at God's present acts among them and for them, and his past actions and promises made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The future of their faith depended on their acceptance of Yahweh's past actions. Faith was therefore not a one-sided thing. Nor was it passive; the Israelites had to act with faith and walk through the sea.

Faith for Israel entails fidelity, "keeping faith with" Yahweh in the manner of a vassal remaining true to an overlord. "Keeping faith with" is thus the opposite of double-mindedness, duplicity and deception, divided loyalties, or outright rebellion (Sheriffs 2003:283). Their full allegiance was actually the counterpart to Yahweh's fidelity. They were to be committed in their faithfulness to God. They were to do what Yahweh required from them. Authentic faith is underpinned by love for God, which is the highest motivation for ethical interaction on the horizontal plane.

Obedience should also result from reverence towards, and faith in God. For Old Testament theology, it is artificial to divorce the inward individual orientation from its out-workings in communal worship and behavior (Sheriffs 2003:284). They believed that love translated to obedience; if they love, they will obey. Obedience is the recognition of God's right to rule and to command (Brown 1995:636). God's rights derive from his supremacy which was demonstrated in his victory over Pharaoh. While they were forced to obey Pharaoh, they were now expected to

obey Yahweh and his agent out of love. That means that obedience to God also implies obedience to others, perpetuating His will.

Their redemption implied that there must be a fundamental change in mindset. Redemption is the precursor and precondition of transformation. They were a slave-people, but now they were a free people. They had to think and act like free people. We agree with Breuggemann (1994:683) when he says that the Exodus text itself shows Israel practicing exactly that kind of imaginative freedom. Thus the “report” of the exodus eventuates in the festival of remembrance, whereby new generations enter into the memory and possibility of liberations. Later, whenever the Israelites were reminded that “I am Yahweh your God who brought you out of Egypt”, it went along with a command or ethical injunction (Kaiser 1983:33). Their redemption was the motivation for obedience. The environment for the law was redemption.

Freedom must bring about transformation. The celebration of Yahweh and the faith of Israel were inescapably mediated through the transformation of private and public life; celebration, because redemption happened and God showed them his greatness, and faith, because God was worthy to be trusted. Celebration must also acknowledge that God alone is to be revered and worshiped and to whom Israel’s doxologies are sung. Without such a response, the great deeds of God would have been without a voice in the world (Fretheim 1991:161).

As Yahweh’s community, Israel was to be holy. They had to bear themselves in a way that affirmed the greatness of Yahweh. Discipline was necessary, and was exemplified in their march out of Egypt (Ex.13:18). Discipline allowed them to submit to leadership. Discipline was necessary to rid themselves of the death-dealing addiction on the reassuring structures of Egypt, because the temptation to return was great. Discipline was necessary to remind them that murmuring was counter-redemptive and that it needed to be avoided in the new community. Discipline told them to be faithful when they were in “a tight fix” and to be still and allow God to do what only he can do (Enns 2000:289).

Gratitude is the affirmation of a certain bond between the giver and the recipient. It motivates actions – most notably giving thanks and doing pleasing acts (Roberts 1995:419). As a virtue, gratitude is not just an occasional feeling, but a well-confirmed trait of personality, character or disposition. The Israelites were to perform good actions out of gratitude to God. Gratitude to God is always fitting. It brings glory to him. The grateful heart never murmurs because it is satisfied. This new community was to be characterized by gratitude.

Finally, as we have already said; Israel had to set the example that it followed. They were not to be like the Egyptians. They were not to oppress others. They were to remember that they themselves were once slaves. Instead, they were to follow the example of Yahweh, who cared for the oppressed and treated them with dignity. Yahweh always intervenes in order to transform a situation in which the oppressor seems in charge and the oppressed hopeless. God's activity became the pattern for Israel; its life was to be lived in imitation of God. Israel was to follow Yahweh's example of love, grace, faithfulness and kindness to all in the community. In this way they were to demonstrate to the entire world that they were Yahweh's prized possession. They were to be a light to the world.

Principles:

Firstly, in a monotheistic context man is accountable to the present God for the whole of his life. Knowing that we are accountable brings about ethical behavior.

Secondly, allegiance to the redeemed community is an expression of allegiance to God. Allegiance thus expresses itself in religion and in socio-ethical ways.

Thirdly, real religious experiences are a powerful motivation for the creation of an accountable and conscientious community, which in turn encourages social harmony.

Fourthly, faith is neither one-sided nor passive. It acts in religious and socio-ethical ways. Authentic faith is underpinned by love for God, which is the highest motivation for ethical interaction.

Fifthly, obedience to God also implies obedience to others who are perpetuating his will.

Sixthly, the environment of the law is redemption. Freedom must bring about transformation that aligns with a new creation.

Finally, gratitude is affirming to both the giver and the receiver. Gratitude is not an occasional feeling, but a well-confirmed trait of personality, character and disposition. The other party is affirmed for its well-deed. Murmuring, on the other hand, is non-affirming and counter-redemptive, and should be avoided.

vii). Redemption as Societal Dialogue.

The very nature of society is bound up in its ability to facilitate dialogue as no society can remain stagnant. Social dialogue is necessary in every society for it to develop and for it to adequately provide for every member; or for every family; or for every clan; or for every tribe; or for every community. Representation of each member, family, clan or community is best expressed by the right to be in conversation and to be able to negotiate and decide.

We are not talking about the kind of dialogue, as in politics, where it is regarded as a useful strategy to deflate tension and postpone decision, even though that was what the foremen tried to do when they approached Pharaoh trying to solicit relief from his harsh treatment (Ex. 5:16). We are also not talking about the kind of dialogue, as in science, where it has been developed into a convenient method of accommodating differences in order to obscure essential conflict (Alant 1981:15). It must not be a mere cloak of acceptability, but must be seen as the essential tool for forging meaningful relationships based upon mutually negotiated and accepted

terms. The Israelites had the right to reject, and even blamed Moses and Aaron of bringing them into disfavor with Pharaoh and his officials (5:21).

In the Ancient Near East covenants were a common occurrence. By nature covenants are a form of dialogue. Perhaps, for our interest, we must mention the political covenants. There was the Royal Grant type of a covenant, and there was the Suzerain-vassal treaty. The former is where the king alone is obligated by the promises he makes for the benefit of his subjects. The Abrahamic Covenant is an example of the Royal Grant. The Suzerain-vassal treaty is the type where both the great king (suzerain) and his subject (vassal) have agreed upon obligations. That agreement is the point of dialogue between the two parties. Later, the Sinaitic Covenant would become an example of the Suzerain-vassal treaty.

a. The Dialogue and Relationship.

The relationship between Yahweh and Israel (Abraham's seed) existed from the time of Abraham through a call. Through redemption they were a nation that belonged to God; him being their God, and they being his people. In the language of the day; we speak of him being their great king, and they being his subjects. Yahweh's obligations in the covenant applied both retrospectively and futuristically, while the people's obligations were to be applied futuristically. Fretheim (1991:213) asks correctly: The issue is what the relationship to God entails: what does it mean to be God's redeemed people in the world?

Yahweh saved Israel from slavery, and this redemptive act was with the demonstration of great power, overthrowing Pharaoh and his whole army. Yahweh was a greater power than Pharaoh or than any other king. In the future, Yahweh will show he is present with his people. His presence with them will be the demonstration of his benefits for them. His presence is a gift of himself to them. The gift of himself is also a gift of his holiness and all that goes with it.

Yahweh's gift of himself had the outcome of trust and reverence, and was what characterized their future covenant relationship. They were to be a peculiar

possession, a royal priesthood and a holy nation to Yahweh. How to be all of these things required obedience and the keeping of the covenant stipulations by Israel. Breuggemann reminds us that the human actions of Moses, at God's command, were about the work of "making holiness", of generating holy reality. A religious community is always in the process of "making holy". "Making holy" is a daring, awesome enterprise that imagines ways in which the mystery of God in all its inscrutable power may be available to us (1994:914).

Trust and reverence were the precursors of obedience of Israel to achieve God's purpose of mutual relationship (Hahn 2005:3). Holiness is the characteristic of God conferred upon his people. It is a privilege in that from among all the nations, they were chosen by a holy God. But what made them holy? It was the Presence that distinguished Israel; God's self-disclosure in the redemptive act, and later in the act of re-establishing the covenant at the Mountain and later in the Tabernacle. Redemption was the indicative for the imperative that was formalized later in the requirement for holiness. Holiness was ethical in content (Mackay 2001:329). The indicative and the imperative aspects of relationship could never be divorced. So, the measurement of holiness in terms of God's own nature prevented the covenant claim from being given a merely moralistic interpretation (Childs 1974:383).

Revelation and lordship were the actual contributions to relationship made by Yahweh. Israel had to open them up to the experience of Yahweh's goodness. Yahweh's goodness was demonstrated in the exodus, the theophany, and the call. The covenant must remain a witness for all ages of the ultimate seriousness of God's revelation of himself. Lordship and revelation go together because without revelation lordship has no meaning, but revelation is Yahweh's trump-card in the negotiation with Israel to accept his lordship. Yahweh revealed his lordship when he showed himself mighty over Pharaoh. The Lord of Israel revealed himself to them through his mighty acts of redemption and his merciful act of covenant-making. The covenant therefore guarantees dignity and well-being within the community in line with Yahweh's goodness revealed to them.

While there was a special relationship that sets them apart from the other nations, theirs was a relationship not only with God (as His People), but also interpersonal relationships (as a redeemed community). Social security depends upon the right ordering of interpersonal relations between the generations when they were reminded to remember the Passover, and therefore their redemption, annually in celebration. Before the people can have fellowship with God, they must be able to have fellowship among themselves. Fellowship in the community and fellowship with God cannot be divorced either.

Relationship and obedient worship are the consequence of a divine presence. The command is rooted in theophany and redemption, but obedience is a form of worship rooted in the self-disclosure of God who spoke and who redeemed them. Their collective worship also required individual expression within the community. This expression happened with the dedication of each firstborn son and animal to Yahweh. This dedication rendered the firstborns holy unto the Lord.

Relationship is and must always remain a two-way connectedness between two parties who agree to be in relationship. Yahweh would be their God, and they would be his people. Being their God meant doing what only God could do for them; he carried them on eagle's wings and brought them to himself (Ex.19:4). Redemption and revelation was God's "duty". Being his people meant that they had to conduct themselves in a way that was commensurable with their God's purpose; for them to know him and to be his people. Obedience and keeping covenant was their duty. *You have seen what I have done to the Egyptians, and how I have carried you on eagle's wings, and have brought you in to myself. And now, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, then you are to me a peculiar treasure among all the peoples. The whole earth is mine, but you are to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation* (Ex.19:4-6). These are the conditional points of dialogue in Sinaitic covenant relationship that came later. Relationship will regulate societal behavior.

b. Dialogue and Process.

The relationship between Yahweh and Israel is something that comes through development. There were a series of actions and changes that brought about the covenant as an outgrowth. Most theologians recognize the call of, and covenant with Abraham as the starting point of the process that finally brought about the covenant that was sealed at Sinai. This process of the covenant with Yahweh comes through the development in time, the development in space and the development in relationship. The development is in actual fact a process of dialogue. Things developed in the way people allowed it to go. Surely, Yahweh influenced the process too, and there were circumstantial influences too.

It is within the development of the temporal, spatial and relational processes that Yahweh, the people and the circumstances made their influences to negotiate the nature of their relationship. That negotiation is what we call the process of dialogue. No society comes into existence without the process of dialogue. It has to negotiate its norms, values, identity and role, and does so through the processes of time, space and relationships.

The temporal or historical process is one that is often alluded to. In most cases it goes back to the time when Yahweh redeemed the people from the land of slavery. He heard their cry. They, who are called Yahweh's first-born son, were taken at the cost of Egypt's firstborn sons. This was an action of Yahweh's initiative and upon his remembrance of his promises to their forefathers. Yahweh carried them on eagle's wings to bring them to himself (Ex.19:4). These deeds of Yahweh within the historical process became the creedal confession of the people, who took Yahweh as the one who dedicated himself for their benefit. Yahweh was their redeemer and they accepted him as such. They saw themselves as a redeemed people.

The spatial process is embedded in the narrative. There was a time and place when they were the servants of Pharaoh. Egypt was a land of suffering for them. Yahweh took them out of that land, and though there were obstacles that tried to

prevent their movement away from Egypt, Yahweh overcame them by the demonstration of mighty signs and wonders. When they were hemmed in by sea and desert, Yahweh opened the sea and they passed through on dry ground. While his people passed through, he at the same time provided watery graves for the Egyptian mighty men.

The people were led by Yahweh personally; his pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night went ahead of them, and they followed. Both Yahweh and Moses are enthusiastic about getting the people to the Mountain of God. They arrive there on the third new moon, on the very day. The mountain rendezvous was where they were to meet with God, hear him speak, and enter into a covenant with him. Yahweh's leading and Israel's following was indeed a dialogue of spatial process where some of their roles as a society were entrenched. Yahweh carried them on eagle's wings; this was their flight from Pharaoh to Yahweh. They were removed from the corrupting environment of Egypt to the consecrating environment of Yahweh's presence.

There was a development in relationship too. Yes, the relationship process runs in tandem with the temporal and spatial processes, but Yahweh intended for it to develop in a specific way. The relational aspects of promise to the forefathers, Yahweh's remembrance, the measuring of his mighty hand against the hand of Pharaoh for the sake of his people, all undergird the process of relationship. The process of relationship was brought to fruition at the Mountain of God. There they met with Yahweh; they heard his voice; they received his laws; they became a nation joined in a special way to their God; they built the tabernacle for Yahweh's dwelling; a priesthood was established with them and from among them; they became Yahweh's specially elected people; and they were to establish the fame of Yahweh through their consecration as his people. Israel was identified as Yahweh's peculiar treasure, kingdom of priests, and his holy nation. Israel was to be a testimony unto Yahweh. Relationships are naturally dialogical and define the role of each member in relationship.

The people's experiences are also processed dialogically. Their experiences of theophany, consecration, law and holy obedience all were processed in a way that defined Israel's identity. Their experience of theophany opened their understanding of their God and his purpose in relation to them and to the nations. The totality of the people saw God and experienced his presence with reverence. They recognized him as a great, awesome and terrible God. He, being a holy God, required them to open themselves up to consecration. Consecration was more a gift of his presence than being a process that was to be followed. Certainly there were ritual requirements and these in themselves were aspects of social dialogue. Consecration was a response to the Presence and a testimony of their relationship with the true, living and present God.

c. Dialogue and Structuralism.

Any society has to have some sort of structure to foster community and communication for its internal and external benefit. Any sort of structure is the result of social dialogue. In other words it must acknowledge that reality is in process (Maritz 1981:8). For Israel, their human or organic structure was initially ordered upon the lines of family and economic solidarities. They regarded themselves as the sons of Jacob, or the sons of Israel, and they were all slaves together of the Egyptians. We know from early in the Book of Exodus that the people were somehow ordered under the leadership of Elders (socially) and foremen (economically). Because of Yahweh's redemptive intention, Moses and Aaron were imposed as leaders (politically and religiously) because they were willing to take the risk of communicating Yahweh's demands to Pharaoh and to mediate between the people and their God.

Moses did not aspire to be in any sort of leadership, nor did he willingly volunteer it. Aaron was included by default; because Moses would not do what he had to without help. Moses was Yahweh's man and Aaron was only his helper. At first their joint approach to Pharaoh brought reproach to the people, and their leadership was openly rejected. The only thing that kept them staying the course was Yahweh's redemptive intention and the fact that Yahweh was with them as he

had promised. Yahweh was going to have to convince the people. The fact that Moses and Aaron were Yahweh's spokesmen to Pharaoh was what finally set them up for leadership among the people and so beginning to fulfill Yahweh's intentionality with this new nation and with Moses as his approved leader for the people.

By the time of the exodus, Moses worked with the social structures already in place, and by it was able to organize the people to leave Egypt by their fifties (Ex.13:18). Moses was in fact the lone leader, because the other leaders were really only the mediators between Moses and the people (of course Moses could also speak directly with the people). The people's complaints were voiced through them. Moses was however affirmed more and more, until finally the people feared Yahweh and believed his servant Moses (Ex.14:31). Moses is appointed as leader by Yahweh and only later affirmed by the people. That was the process of reality.

When the people arrived at Mount Sinai, both Moses and Yahweh focused the people's attention on the two main events; namely that of Yahweh's coming presence and of Moses' authoritative position as mediator and leader. Bosman (2007:329) reminds us that Moses' leadership was designed to be a model for ethical consideration. He was a lawgiver and interpreter of the Law; he was a model for all true prophets; he was intercessor and mediator; and the word of the Lord was his priority. The positions of Yahweh and Moses with respect to the people were aimed at the Covenant about to be made between Yahweh and the people. Within this relationship between Yahweh and the people the structures of leadership were clearly developed. The process of consecration requires an ongoing action of self-giving to the structures that were being developed.

The covenant confirmed Yahweh to be their God, and they became his people with particular characteristics expected and developed; they were Yahweh's treasured possession, his royal priesthood and a nation holy to him. For the relationship to exist in this way there needed to be priesthood and a place of Presence. It was within the covenant-making process that we have noticed a clear hierarchy of relationship developing, which in turn provided the societal stability that came with

it. Yahweh was God. Moses was authenticated by Yahweh speaking with him “face to face”. The Elders represented the people in the ceremony of covenant-making. Some (Aaron and Hur) were appointed judges having to preside over matters in the community in Moses’ absence. Each individual within the corporate had to commit to covenant loyalty before Yahweh. The sacrifices at the meeting place were to be a perpetual ritual for the ensuing generations. The leadership structure that was developed was the product of reality in process. Reality in process is in fact social dialogue towards creating social stability. Social stability is encouraged by a healthy social structure.

Finally, no society can know any sort of cohesiveness without anything that cements relationships. The covenant code, that is the Law, served as the thing that kept the society together. In the Law the aspects of symbols, norms, values and ethics were all defined and given meaning and purpose within this society. Yahweh’s self-giving was found in the giving of the Law when he came down in their sight, and spoke it in their hearing, and Israel’s self-giving was found in their obedience to the Law. Corporate obedience was the expression of holiness in the areas of worship and of ethics and morality. The authentic hearing of the Voice motivated obedience to the suzerain, who acted for their benefit and within the structure, which created stability. Obedience was an expression of an accepted covenant responsibility, and it demonstrated the quality of Israel’s existence. They were a new kind of kingdom; and a new kind of nation; with a new kind of priesthood that demonstrated that they were a people of the Presence, and whose conduct was characterized by Yahweh’s awesome and terrible presence.

d. Dialogue and Functionalism.

Israel was to function in a particular way in this world. Again, they could only function in that way if they understood what was required and if they accepted their particular role. Their understanding and acceptance of their role were products of negotiation and dialogue. Israel functioned in three ways; firstly in terms of their *faith*; then in terms of their *obedience*; and lastly in terms of their *role*. These three ways were the realities of their sociological existence with which they were in

dialogue with (Alant 1981:18-21). Faith was the expression of their *metaphysical* functionalism. Obedience was the expression of their *epistemological* functionalism. Role was the expression of their *ontological* functionalism. It was within these functional settings that they were to recognize the meaning of their existence. Function unlocks meaning, and meaning gave purpose, and purpose motivated conduct which was ethically conditioned and which was in the best interest of their ongoing social identity.

On the level of Israel's *faith*, we have to understand that neighboring nations had a multiplicity of deities. It was common to Ancient Near Eastern nations to have family gods and clan gods so that polytheism was commonplace. We may even suspect that Israel herself might have espoused other gods. Israel had to be convinced that Yahweh is the only true and living God. In his redemptive activity, and later in their covenantal context, Yahweh was able to convince the Israelites of that fact. They saw his awesome acts of redemption; they saw his descending presence upon the mountain; and they heard his voice from that trembling mountain. Three times the people pledged allegiance to Yahweh and promised to obey all his words. The covenant required Israel to be absolutely monotheistic and accountable to Yahweh alone.

Their newly entrenched monotheism corrected their retrospective faith too. Yahweh was the God who created all things. Yahweh was seen as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Yahweh had a covenant with these forefathers, which was the reason for his redemptive work. The people understood that all other gods were in fact idols and that as covenant community they were to have no other gods before Yahweh. They were to banish all other gods from their community. They were not to treat Yahweh in the same way that other nations treated their gods; that is, they were not allowed to represent Yahweh in any physical form. They were not to make Yahweh "man-sized". They were to respect Yahweh, not using his Name in vain by profaning the divine reputation through their conduct. Israel's entire life must conform to Yahweh's presence. Israel was to conform to Yahweh as creator and as sovereign. They were ultimately accountable to the Creator and Lord. They

were expected to emulate their creator. As their God, they too were to display an egalitarian and humanitarian society.

The autokerygma, *I am Yahweh*, was a statement of God's self-presentation and self-giving. This self-confession of Israel's God was in essence that which stated he was creator, redeemer, beneficent king and holy God. This statement set Yahweh apart from every other god. These gods were nothing and faith in them was futile. Faith in the self-presented, self-giving and self-confessed God, who said "I am Yahweh", is indeed worthwhile faith.

Israel also had to function according the covenant code. They were committed to conduct themselves in *obedience* to Yahweh. Their epistemological role was that of obedience. They had to know and understand the actions, the words and the Law of Yahweh. Though its stipulations were both vertical as well as horizontal conduct, their obedience was to Yahweh. The words and the Law were indeed revelation, and their pledged obedience was in fact obedience to Yahweh, who spoke in their hearing. Authentic hearing led to obedience to the voice of God. They understood the timeless principles of the code. The Law regulated the fundamental aims of conduct for the Covenant-people. The commandments of God to his people reflected moral laws which were a display of the character of God.

The Law was God's personal address to his people; the substance of the covenant. Clements (1972:122) asserts that the laws are addressed directly to the individual in the second person singular, but they relate to actions which concerned the entire community. They therefore have a strongly social character, and both the religious and social laws concern conduct which was regarded as disruptive of the life of the community. The people had to consider its stipulations, and their pledge to obey had to be one that followed an intelligent decision or agreement. The agreement included their relationship, both vertically and horizontally. The call to obedience was a call to holiness, and holiness was a reflection on the horizontal plane of what existed on the vertical plane.

Lastly, the *role* of Israel was a display of their ontological existence. Their role was derived from who they were to be or become. They have accepted the role that Yahweh chose for them. They had a covenant responsibility. They had to be something for Yahweh's sake; they had to be something for their own sake; and they had to be something for the sake of the nations. What they had to be on all three these levels was whom they were really meant to be. While we do not agree with McBride (2006:134) stating that it was envisioned by Israelite theologians, we want to use his words and say that Yahweh envisioned the possibility of life in community as a distinctive sacral vocation.

They were to be a *peculiar treasure* to Yahweh. Out of all the nations of the earth, Yahweh chose Israel to have this special relationship with himself. This relationship was to show that God was good. He was able to make them a special people who were related to him on his terms. They were to be loyal to Yahweh as he was loyal to them. The character of God, particularly his goodness, was to be displayed through these people for all to see. This relationship was often understood on the level and intimacy of a marriage relationship. It was exclusive.

Israel was to be a *holy nation* for Yahweh and for their sake. They were a holy nation among the nations because they alone belonged to a holy God. They were a holy nation because they were called to obey and emulate Yahweh. The holiness required of Israel was always ethical in content (Mackay 2001:329). They were a holy nation because they were to "house" the presence of a holy God. They were to show that the Presence could not be trivialized nor domesticated through ungodliness. Yahweh's presence was a holy gift. They were expected to give a holy response to a holy God. They themselves had to be dedicated to Yahweh. Their holiness was both Yahweh's initiative and Israel's response. Holiness is created to enable Presence. God's presence among the nations was to be found in the midst of this holy nation. Holiness has everything to do with conduct; holy conduct was ethical behavior and more.

Israel was to be a *kingdom of priests* to Yahweh for the sake of the nations. As a kingdom they were to be a theocracy. Yahweh was their sovereign king. They were

under Yahweh's rule. As a kingdom of priests they had the privilege of the presence of Yahweh. They could enter that Presence, and they could enjoy the benefits of it. Their service as priests was exercised in two ways; first to Yahweh as the one to be worshiped and second, to be Yahweh's servants towards the nations. This 'nation' would be unlike other nations which aim for the glory and dominance that characterize earthly politics. They would be a servant nation whose task was to mediate between the divine world and the ordinary world of mankind: that was the essence of priesthood (Mackay 2001:328). There is the emphatic "you alone are to me a kingdom of priests" to show their unique relationship with Yahweh. "Kingdom of priests" is a phrase which is unique in the Bible. The people as a whole were set apart to this worldwide service. They were to be a servant nation rather than a ruling nation. They were called to demonstrate the glories of their God to the world.

e. Dialogue and Stability.

The irony was that the Presence was both de-stabilizing and stabilizing. Yahweh's stunning promise to come down to meet with his people caused a frantic preparation by each individual and by the community. They had to wash their garments and they were to abstain from other intimate relationships. That third day was a day of unexpected things. Yahweh was an alien presence, threatening and destabilizing. The people trembled and the mountain trembled. Presence and fire descended, but the people did not want Yahweh to speak directly to them. They were scared; it seemed like God could break out against them at any moment. Their fear was also a response of ethical significance, because the fear of God amounts to a moral concept and an ethical stance (Davies 1962:75). Later, people who feared God were those who acted according to a moral imperative. The fear of God was to be with the people so that they would keep from sinning (Ex.20:20).

The people were theologically naïve about the dimensions of divine holiness. Nevertheless their willingness to obey all the words of Yahweh required them to listen to those words; whether spoken directly in their hearing or through Moses. In fact, God's personal address gave them some confidence because they knew that

this was indeed the substance of the Covenant. Divine presence incorporated “guidance” for individuals and Israel as a whole (Bosman 2004:4). Therefore, not only their theological naïveté, but also their day to day navigation through life was satisfied by the Presence. In Durham’s words, the presence of Yahweh is the centerpiece of Israel’s unity serving as a theological anchor and compass (1987:xxi).

The presence and glory of Yahweh was able to create holiness, which in turn again enabled Presence. God chooses a place because he has entered history with a people for whom place is important (Fretheim 1991:273). The place is where the society finds itself and where they can express themselves religiously (to God) and ethically (to fellow man). The mountain was that place. Later the Tabernacle was going to be against all forms of idolatry, yet in their midst becoming the stabilizing Presence among the people. The self-revealing God, who is not silent, elects to be present among his people. This is the essence of the Covenant promise: “I will make my dwelling with you”. It is a deliberately gracious act when God said, “I will meet” with the sons of Israel. It will be an active and encouraging Presence. It was this meeting that authenticated their social identity.

Within the Covenant the people’s entire life was to conform to the Presence by obedience to the divine speech. Conforming to the Presence became a stabilizing and beneficent experience. The people came to know Yahweh personally; he who said “I will be God to them” and “they shall be my people”. The promises: “They will know” ...”and I will dwell with them” provided them with a confidence in their relationship with Yahweh and with each other that enabled them to keep covenant and to obey the Law. Obedience that comes from Presence is in fact the stabilizing force in the community. The whole experience that moved from de-stability to stability within the community is the point of dialogue in the becoming of the Israelite society.

Principles:

Firstly, social dialogue is necessary for societal development and for the community to stand upon mutually negotiated and accepted terms.

Secondly, dialogue with the Presence is an awesome enterprise that imagines ways in which the mystery of God with its inscrutable power is made available to the community for becoming holy. Holiness was ethical in content.

Thirdly, the community can accept God's lordship through negotiation and revelation, and is expressed in faith and obedience. Faith and obedience is a form of worship.

Fourthly, relationship is a two-way connectedness, and can only happen by agreement. This applies to relationships both vertically and horizontally. God decides to redeem and we decide to "obey his voice". Relationship comes through dialogue; a process that is developed and sustained along temporal and spatial lines.

Fifthly, community requires structure through dialogue for its internal and external communications and solidarities. Structure through self-organization is a dialogical process which provides social stability.

Sixthly, every member must commit to an egalitarian and humanitarian society in the expression of his role and community loyalty.

Finally, those things that foster or threaten stability in the community must become known to all in the community. Stability is thus a dialogical necessity.

viii). Covenant as Societal Establishment.

Communities and societies function as such because they have agreed rules of establishment or a system of interrelated and interconnected institutions, collectivities and groups. We may talk about agreement of systems, cultural norms, institutions, market mechanisms, legal and other structures, values, collectivities and roles (van Eeden 1981:73-96). In short, social integration is maintained by organic solidarity developed within the history of the community.

While we may talk of some sort of history of this nation, we have to remember that they existed as an independent group for only three months by the time they entered into a covenant with Yahweh. When they made the covenant they constituted as a nation in some sense of the word. The Covenant code spelt out the rules of agreement that applied both vertically (in religious matters) and horizontally (in ethical matters). The Covenant was the main mechanism of societal establishment for the nation of Israel. The Covenant code was mainly religious, moral and ethical in nature. There was a widespread link between the sacred and the secular, and the two were not always easily distinguishable in Israelite society. The principles of *creation*, *election* and *Law* were central to the Covenant. That means that nothing was purely secular for the people of Yahweh. The scope of our discussion excludes dealing with the Law in any detail.

a. Creation.

Yahweh is the creator of all that exists; therefore the whole earth belongs to him (Ex. 19:5). He owns all that exists. So, therefore, ultimately all of creation is accountable to God. The Covenant includes creation principles, such as mutualism, equality and personhood (McCloughry 1995:111). The creation perspective illustrates God's original intentions for the created world. All we have comes from God. What he has created is his gift to creation in general and to humanity in particular. Creation theology is a prevailing principle in the book of Exodus, and we may integrate cosmic order and social order (Fretheim 1991:204). The Covenant stipulates some requirements from the covenant people in respect

of the creation. The doctrine of creation is a powerful motivation for ethical interaction. The creation insight about people is expressed by the concept “person in community”.

There are three definite allusions to the aspect of creation in the Exodus covenant pericopes that are significant redemption concepts. In Ex.19:5 Yahweh says that the whole earth is his. The idea of ownership comes from the doctrine of creation; that Yahweh created all that was created. All that Yahweh has created is at his disposal. He can use it as and how he chooses to do. If God chooses anything to bless, such a choice is based upon his grace. Out of all the earth that was at his disposal, God chose Israel. They were privileged and dealt with according to the grace of God. Their response must then be a response to his grace.

Another reference to the creation is found in the Decalogue. The commandment on the Sabbath calls as its support the fact that God ceased his creative activity on the seventh day. Because God rested on the seventh day, his people were called upon to emulate him and also rest from all labor on the Sabbath Day, and allowing all under their control to rest. The social effects included the aspects of rhythm between work and rest for all living creatures involved in work; it included the principle of egalitarianism where all levels of society were allowed recovery time, which also upholds the principle of humanitarianism.

We know that the Sabbath Law extended to include *release* and *restoration* of land and *freedom* in the covenant community. These three are the foundational aspects of the Sabbath Law and of the doctrine of creation. The Sabbath is about resting and consecration, as they were to remember to keep it holy. This law, incidentally, was unique to Israel among the ancient nations. It fostered the idea of a community of well-being. Society is encouraged to creation-keeping for its own future good. Dumbrell (1988:37) articulates the purpose of the Sabbath well: “The concept of rest becomes increasingly significant as the biblical goal of redemption is seen as rest in God’s presence”.

Yet, another, though indirect, reference to creation in the Decalogue is the commandment to honor parents. Parents are representatives of God as providers of life to their children. Such is the order of creation. We are to respect the source of our lives, and when we do so we actually respect God as the ultimate giver of life. This commandment creates an inter-generational connection. Only with this generational consideration can we guarantee a future well-being in society. It helps to keep the integrity of the family in tact.

b. Election.

The covenant between Yahweh and Israel is eminently about Israel's election. Yes, we have already seen that they were elected among all the other nations of the world. They were chosen, not because they were better or more numerous than the other nations (Dt.7:7). They were slaves. They were chosen simply because of God's gracious initiative and *hesed* (faithfulness). He is a covenant-keeping God. God chose them for their benefit.

They were elected so that they could be Yahweh's people. Yahweh's presence with them confirmed them as his people. As the people of Yahweh, they were to fill a particular role as a light to the nations. They were to bear testimony to Yahweh. God envisioned Israel to be a holy people with a global ministry of demonstrating to all the nations of the earth what it meant to participate in the holiness of God (Hahn, online:4). What we have said under functionalism above may be appropriately repeated here. There is the emphatic "you alone" are to me a *kingdom of priests* to show their unique relationship with Yahweh. "Kingdom of priests" is a phrase which is unique in the Old Testament. The people as a whole were set apart to this worldwide mission. They were to be a servant nation rather than a ruling nation.

c. Law.

The Commandments were given to a people who had already experienced salvation. There was no other nation so great to have such righteous decrees and

laws as the Law that Yahweh gave them. The Law was given to instruct the people of God in the way of righteousness. It was given to fence Israel; in to keep them from conduct which would mar their continued fellowship with God (Mackay 2001:339). Stuart adds that the Law was paradigmatic, giving models of behaviors and models of prohibitions/punishments relative to those behaviors, but they made no attempt to be exhaustive (2006:442). The Law has its origin in Yahweh himself, and that is why the Law is the expression of Yahweh's self-giving. The giving of the Law was enveloped in the presence of Yahweh. Yahweh spoke the Law by solemn declaration. The Law is perfect, holy and good. The Law was God's standard for his people to live by. Negatively, the Law is not understood as something to be obeyed just because God says so. The Law is to be obeyed because it can be seen to serve life and well-being (Fretheim 1991:205). The people were committed to the Law of Yahweh because Law is integrated with life.

Before the Law was given, however, the community operated under a system of consensus and an eldership judiciary. The eldership was the judge in small matters that came up in the community. It is clear, that when Moses and Joshua were to ascend the mountain, Moses appointed Aaron and Hur to judge (big?) matters during his absence. They must have used the established societal norms and values as the standard for their judgments. When the Law came their standards became more established in society.

Childs is correct in saying that the Law defines the holiness demanded by the covenant people (1974:383). While the people were committed to the timeless principles of the Law, they were not always required to memorize it for verbatim recitation, though we do not have a stated requirement for verbatim recitation and, in fact, Deuteronomy 5 does not recite the Decalogue verbatim. In the Law lays the fundamental aims of conduct for the covenant people. The character of God was seen in the moral laws. The measurement of holiness in terms of God's own nature prevents the covenant claim from being given a purely moralistic interpretation (Childs 1974:383). It was his personal address to the people, and was the substance of the Covenant. The Law reflected the will of God for his people. In the

Law we understand Yahweh to be merciful and faithful, showing unending goodness to his people.

God spoke the Law to a people who unitedly and enthusiastically gave full acceptance to it. The people's response was not presumptuous; it was their resolve to do. Their acceptance was their willingness to be party to the covenant. Their commitment to the Law and to the covenant was based upon their confidence in God. The Covenant with all its symbols, including the Law, was fully, voluntarily and in unison accepted by all the people. We must, however, remember that Yahweh committed first to the Covenant.

Because the Law comes from God, its essence is love. It encourages love for God and love for neighbor. Love is, and must always be, active and self-sacrificial (Field 1995:9). Obedience to the Law is being active and self-sacrificing, and could therefore be an expression of love. God is faithful to his covenant promises, and therefore provided redemption and the Law to his people. The giving of the Law is God's self-expression of love. Obedience to the Law was an expression of loyalty to Yahweh, and that loyalty was to be protected by social responsibility (Wright 1995:54). That loyalty was an expression of the people's love.

It is worth our while to recount the ethical aspects of the Law as it was applied to the community of God's people. Every law was bound up in the identity of Yahweh, for he identified himself with it when he uses the *autokerygma*, "I am Yahweh". His person is not only tied to the Law, but was tied to the redeeming benefits he provided. Yahweh was part of Israel's narrative and so is the Law. Life in relationship with God means that certain words and acts do justice to that relationship. His redemption became the basis of his claim upon this generation. They belonged to Yahweh and were expected to be loyal to him as their only God.

As they kept the Sabbath they made holy time. They were motivated to rest because God rested. In Breuggemann's words, "This God is not a workaholic" (1994:845). Their creation-keeping was God-emulating, and provided the principles of egalitarianism and humanitarianism in total contrast to what the Egyptians

provided them. Israel is commanded to observe the Sabbath in order to remember its slavery and deliverance (Childs 1974:416). They understood that the underlying principles of *release* and *restoration* of land and *freedom* in the covenant community was what they were to aspire to. By those principles they were not allowed to exploit the weak, but instead, provide them opportunities to fully recuperate. Aliens, widows and orphans were given special care by the community. The Sabbath is a great day of equalization in which all social distinctions are overcome, and all rest alike (Wolff 1974:139). The humanitarian concern of the Sabbath is a bridge to the commandments concerned with inter-human relationships.

The second tablet was dedicated to the imperative of loving one's neighbor. Communal relationship was at the core of its intention. Honoring parents was a way of the child taking God's hand and the hand of the ensuing generation. Parents represented God. Honoring parents was facilitating the blessing of the previous generation to pass on to the next. This is the beginning point of the well-being of society; when we highly regard the integrity of the family, and the position of authority in the community. Mackay (2001:351) aptly states that the status of father and mother had to be jointly acknowledged to preserve the integrity of the family and also promote the well-being of society.

The Law is not only meant to serve the judicial system, but it provides an open-ended possibility to do what is good. It facilitates creation and redemption. It is not so much about what we must not do, but about what we must do to create community according to God's standards. The Law allows us to emulate the God of the Covenant by proactive positive action. The Law thus becomes the norm within that society. It also clarified societal and individual rights and responsibilities.

Principles:

The first principle is that social integration is maintained by organic solidarity.

Secondly, Yahweh is the Creator of all, and all creation is accountable to him. The creation perspective integrates the cosmic order with the social order. The doctrine of creation is a powerful motivation for ethical interaction.

The third principle relates to the second. The Sabbath calls for God to be emulated by allowing all under our control to rest, and thus creating a rhythm between work and rest for all living creatures involved in work. It fosters egalitarianism and humanitarianism in its prospects of release and restoration.

To honor parents is another principle of creation-keeping. It is about respect for the earthly source of life, passed on from generation to generation.

Fifthly, God's election of Israel (and of the Church) is to set apart a servant community for the benefit of others.

Finally, the Law, which has its origin in God, is his self-giving standard for his people to live by. The Law reflects the will of God for his people, encouraging love for God and for neighbor. Every law is bound up in the identity of Yahweh encouraging the God-emulating principles of egalitarianism and humanitarianism. The Law facilitates creation and redemption.

ix). Covenant and Societal Conflict.

Any society is open to the possibility of conflict, and every society negotiates ways to resolve those conflicts in a way that has the least damage on it. Much of the conflict is already resolved if there are societal norms in place, because often conflict is nothing but a deviation from those accepted norms. Our concern is societal conflict within a covenantal setting, and we shall not look at it from a general understanding. We shall first mention the conflict in general, and then show the particular covenantal alternative, which will also serve as a proposed solution for the conflict.

Community refers to those who have an identity as a group (McCloughry 1995:108). Societal conflict is nothing but the threat to damage that identity, its justice or its interdependence. Sometimes these threats come about by the pace of change. Therefore, societal change must be managed in a manner that obviates conflict as far as is possible. Unfortunately, sometimes change is not so easily managed because it is often suddenly forced upon societies by circumstances. However, certain societal tenets are able to help control and soften the effects of change and resolve conflict.

a. Hierarchy and Class.

We have already said that the Covenant has as its underlying terms the rule of egalitarianism. That means that we cannot talk about class distinctions in a way that is commonly understood. There were no class distinctions in the redeemed Israelite society; whether on religious, economic or political levels. Class distinctions showed preference for certain groups over other groups and created power-structures. It created a situation where some groups were denied privileges simply because they were of a disadvantaged group.

Class distinction often creates a superiority complex in the higher classes which is often expressed in abuse. Ill-treatment of any kind was not to be allowed among the covenant community on humanitarian grounds. The lower class is often a socially marginalized and exploited group. Both class and power structures are to be condemned within the covenant community.

Can we speak of equality in legitimate hierarchical systems? Yes, we can. In fact the covenant people had developed a social structure of leadership that described role rather than class distinction. We recognize a legitimate hierarchy in a society when it comes through social contract that secures a *network* of rights and obligations required for the viability of proper social life (Williams 1995:796). This hierarchical network ensures proper government in society. We recognize within Israelite community a hierarchical system as follows: Yahweh as God was over all, and all are accountable to him; on the human level the hierarchy was Moses, the

priesthood, the elders, the judges, fathers, the people, individuals and the generations (families) that follow. Under the people we find tribal, clan and family structures too. Actually, this hierarchical system best operates through dialogue. It is within this hierarchical system that role was defined.

Israel's egalitarian and humanitarian societal hierarchy was necessary for social order, and social justice could best be facilitated through hierarchy. Every individual within the hierarchy saw themselves as a vital part in making social order and justice work as it should. Hierarchy expedited social order and justice. Hierarchy facilitates both the upward and downward flow of communication according to authority structures. It is a system of mediator-ship and counselor-ship. Mediators always seek the best for those they represent before a higher personality and the counselor always has the client's benefit at heart (Meier 1992:301).

No hierarchy is of any value unless there is an ultimate authority to which all are ultimately accountable. In Israel's case that ultimate authority to which all accountability is due, is Yahweh, the God of Israel. It is really under Yahweh that the whole society becomes united. He is Lord and ultimate judge. The Covenant that exists between Yahweh and Israel has caused all the people to unify in obedience under Yahweh. Only in their recognition that they are subject to Yahweh, are they able to recognize the need to be subject to the authority structure that Yahweh and they have set in place. Obedience must therefore be the operating concept downward in the community, because all authority is really vested in God. Corporate obedience facilitates mutual relationship and respect.

b. Commitment and Coercion.

Coercion includes force or the threat of force, and other actions or threats of adverse actions (Attwood 1995:387). Social coercion inevitably leads to social upheaval or revolution. In fact coercion at any level, even down to the individual, leads to rebellion of some sort. Even though the children of Israel often rejected

Moses' (really Yahweh's) leadership, they always 'came around' because they became convinced.

Yes, they were often forced into a situation by their circumstances, but they were never forced into anything by any person representing Yahweh. They were forced into situations by Pharaoh; to a point where it became worth their while to opt for emancipation. Pharaoh represented coercion, but Yahweh opened to them the possibilities of choice, even if it was for what was, in their eyes, the "lesser of two evils". Coercion was not the way of the covenant community. Coercion is the opposite of love (grace), because love is not coerced and it never coerces.

The community established the existing covenant with Yahweh freely and voluntarily at Sinai. Three times did they commit themselves to obey all the words that Yahweh had spoken. They were convinced by the powerful portents of Yahweh's presence and by Yahweh's speech. They realized that the powerful Presence was indeed a strong motivation to obedience, consecration and allegiance. God had a message for the people, and when they heard it, by direct speech or through Moses, they were convinced.

They also understood the conditional nature of the established Covenant; *If you obey...and keep...then you will be to me....* They had to make an open-ended commitment in this covenant. They understood that they needed to *be* and *do* something in this covenant relationship in order to be part of it. In short, they were to *be* a holy nation of priests who belong to Yahweh; and they had to *do* according to all that Yahweh had spoken. They accepted the role Yahweh chose for them by pledging faithfulness to him. We know that their pledge to obedience came before and after the Covenant terms were spelled out. Israel began a new life of obedience (Breuggemann 1994:881).

The self-giving autokerygmatic statement, *I am Yahweh*, indicated Yahweh's own commitment to the Covenant. Because of the divine commitment, all the stipulations of the covenant code were enthusiastically, voluntarily, unreservedly and in totality accepted by all the people. Their enthusiasm was seen in their united

response of commitment. There was full acceptance by the people. Their response was not presumptuous, but was what they wholeheartedly resolved to do. They understood that conformance to holiness was conformance to the will and purpose of the King, in whom they had great confidence.

c. Cohesiveness and Divisiveness.

We are sure that the principle, “unity brings strength and division causes a fall”, was understood by the Israelite community. Divisiveness is not good for any community, and it brings about social disorder. Division causes strife in the community. We find nothing of division among the Israelites in our present texts. On the contrary, we are able to demonstrate cohesiveness in the community throughout these present narratives.

The community is always referred to in a corporate way. They commit themselves corporately even if the stipulations were intended for individuals. This was a mechanism of creating, if not confirming, corporate identity. Every individual was always a part of the whole community. Each personal “you” of corporate Israel heard the revelatory words spoken in two supremely authoritative voices, those of God and Moses (McBride 2006:137). The community was always both individually and corporately responsible. Therefore, an individual was always accountable to the community.

The totality of the people saw God and experienced his presence with reverence. The whole community heard in an authentic way the voice of God. They experienced the Presence as a community together. Their corporate response was to corporate obedience and to corporate holiness. They all accepted the role Yahweh chose for them. They all pledged faithfulness and obedience to Yahweh and to the Covenant. The Covenant code spelled out their conduct promises. Oosthuizen (1996:182) concludes correctly that the Covenant code indicates that God is not only served in the sacral realm, but in every aspect of the social fabric. Their service to one another was an expression of their service to God.

d. Solidarity and Exploitation.

Exploitation is supported by the erroneous and unethical belief that those exploited are worth less than the perpetrating individual or group. It emanates from the premise of greed and is ultimately selfish. It is encouraged by a spirit of superiority, domination, ruthlessness and greed. It boils down to disrespect of those exploited. Exploiters use others for their own benefit and at the expense of those they exploit. Hill identifies the crux underpinnings of exploitation: "Exploitation is the inevitable product of class struggle. It presupposes that a worth is contradicted, and a power is abused" (1995:367). Israelites are never to exploit others, because they themselves were slaves and exploited before.

Humanity is our first point of solidarity. To be human is to be-in-relation. Humanity is a social identity. Human beings stand in relation to the rest of the created order in terms of personal-impersonal (Bridger 1995:25). Again, the ideas of mutuality and equality cannot be avoided, and our responsibility in community is to prevent exploitation because of this basic solidarity. We are all created in the image of God.

Israel's solidarity as a nation is further derived from their common call, and experience of the Divine Presence in redemption and covenant. The "blood of the covenant" created solidarity between the two parties (Breuggemann 1994:881). No other nation had such an experience. This nation was the special creation of Yahweh as a new community to be the vehicle for blessing to the whole world of nations (Wright 1995:51). Being Israel meant having an ethical agenda by showing the way of the Lord. Ethics stand between the election and mission of Israel.

The Covenant community is called to solidarity with the downtrodden because they themselves were slaves at one stage. As an expression of covenant society, they were to pay much attention to the protection of the weak. They were called upon to the practicing of impartial justice (Ex. 21-23). God's favor was always understood to be with the oppressed. The Covenant community had to recognize that creation

in general and human life in particular have a spiritual worth beyond merely utilitarian considerations, which calls for a due order and mutual respect in human society on earth (Hill 1995:368).

Another point of solidarity is found in their liturgical action; they all were under the blood of the covenant, having a common destiny and identity, and the reference to blood is a witness to profound solidarity, wrought by the initiative of God (Breuggemann 1994:882). In this liturgical action of covenanting, both Yahweh and Israel as a whole, being parties to the covenant, pledged themselves individually to the other party. Yahweh was pledged to Israel and Israel was sworn to Yahweh. The Decalogue stands as a critical principle against every kind of exploitative social relation. By keeping the Decalogue Israel created a social vision of possibility that every society can be transformed and made into a liberating rather than exploitative force.

e. Mutuality and Selfishness.

We understand that every person is unique, and therefore individualism is necessary to some extent. Individualism, however, can be counter-productive when it stands in the way of community. Yet, community must not stifle individualism to the extent that human individual freedom is lost. When this freedom is lost, then so is accountability. We notice that the Commandments are addressed to the community, but it requires the individual's deliberate response. Love for God or neighbor is in reality a subjective experience, or better still, *decision*; yet, practiced only within community.

Self-centredness and autonomy always goes against community, and lack the tenets of love and self-sacrifice. It may even extend to the point of belittling one's neighbor, and to belittle one's neighbor is to belittle one's community (Tutu 1999:127). The existential stress exaggerates freedom of choice and ignores the dependency of the individual on the community. Autonomy must always be limited in society (Cook 1995:180). People are not free to do what they want to when they live in community. Again, the Decalogue shows us that autonomy is limited,

because where the best interest of another is at stake, then we can't just take another's strength, or wife, or goods, or life. Self-centredness and autonomy are always limited as we are responsible to God, who created, redeemed and included in relationship with him.

Selfishness stands against the principle of self-giving. The Covenant community is unique in that it has as its core value the principle of self-giving. Breuggemann (1994:914) comments about the Covenant community whose preoccupation is with "offerings"; it is clear that the capacity to "make holy" depends on the fullness of giving. Where there is no rich offering, there will be very little "holy making". In a community that is unable or unwilling to give or to yield, the outcome can only be profanation, whereby neighborhood, environment, and finally self become mere objects, commodities for exploitation.

Israel's future depends upon the attitude of mutuality. They were redeemed together. They made a covenant with Yahweh together. The promise of land in the future is that which they will share together. They are stewards together of what God has given and is going to give them. The mutuality between them and Yahweh is the encouragement for mutuality on a horizontal level too. Mutuality is also built upon the foundation of respect.

Principles:

The first principle must be to recognize that societal conflicts derive from deviations from social norms. Resolving this kind of conflict must aim at having the least damage. Societal conflict is nothing but the threat to damage its identity, justice and solidarity.

Secondly, societal change must be managed in ways that softens its effects and its possibility to bring disruption.

Thirdly, egalitarian aims must guard against building class and power structures.

Fourthly, equality and hierarchy can co-exist where distinctions are made on the basis of role rather than on the basis of class.

Fifthly, hierarchy facilitates societal order, social justice and communication. Yahweh is the ultimate authority to whom all are ultimately accountable. He is Lord and ultimate Judge.

Sixthly, social coercion leads to social upheaval and rebellion. Coercion is the opposite of love, for love never coerces. Israel began a new life of un-coerced obedience.

Seventhly, divisiveness causes social disorder; cohesiveness brings unity.

Eighthly, exploitation is supported by the unethical spirit of superiority, domination, ruthlessness and greed. Solidarity on the basis of our shared humanity, experience, belief and call, is the better option.

Finally, un-stifled individualism should never stand in the way of community. Mutuality must be built upon the foundation of respect.

x). Covenant and Societal Consciousness.

Their societal self-consciousness was that of a united people. They knew that the integrity of the individual was integrally woven to the integrity of marriage, and thus the integrity of family, which in turn made for the integrity of the community. They were above all else to be known as the covenant community. Their covenant with Yahweh required that kind of community outlook. They were a community where each one knew their place in the hierarchy that Yahweh established.

Family integrity was undergirded by healthy marriages and healthy parent-child relationships as the fifth and seventh commandments required. They were to honor parents and show faithfulness to their spouses. Every individual and every family

had to treat others with dignity and respect in that they were to guard their property and character as the eighth, ninth and tenth commandments required. In fact the very life of every individual was to be treated as sacrosanct according to the sixth commandment. They were to be a community of individuals for the community united.

All of these grand ethical ideals meant nothing unless they considered themselves ultimately accountable to Yahweh. Yes, the accountability structure within the established hierarchy also was regulated by the fact of their ultimate accountability to Yahweh. Yahweh, the creator of all things, is the ultimate judge according to his creation principles, redemption principles and according to his Law. The Israelite was provided with the possibility of forgiveness through shed blood. In this way they were able to make peace with Yahweh and avert punishment. There was communal celebration after atonement efficacy. Sometimes the punishment for the sins of the individual was placed upon the individual alone; but sometimes the punishment for the sin of an individual would visit the community as a whole, for they understood their corporate identity. Only Yahweh decided the extent to which corporate punishment was to be applied.

The Israelites now were able to worship Yahweh in the way that he prescribed. Certainly, their liturgical system was not yet fully developed at this stage, but it provided a possibility for corporate worship. Their social self-consciousness was enhanced by the corporate-ness of their worship. Their young men could become involved for their strength; the people were involved in their communal promise to Yahweh, so creating both insipient priesthood, and later, a formal one.

The totality of the people experienced the Presence as they “saw” and “heard” God. Their worship allowed them an enthusiastic response to the holy God. Together the people presented themselves to God, and in that togetherness expressed their social self-consciousness.

Their corporate formal agreement to the terms of the Covenant was both a pledge to God and to each other among themselves that they would keep its terms. The

whole congregation accepted all the words of Yahweh. Together they submitted to the covenant ritual, regarding themselves as a corporate party opposite the other party, Yahweh, to this covenant. They and Yahweh are bound by the blood of the covenant to each other. God identified with them, and they identified with him. From then onward every worship service was to be a covenant renewal service. Every worship service was an anticipation of revelation and Presence as a covenant benefit.

Yahweh made provision for their generations to come, so as to perpetuate togetherness in the community. The very tabernacle whose blueprint was provided would become the center among the community because it was going to be the symbol of Yahweh's presence with his people. While a specific place for worship is important, a specific geographic locale is not; the Tabernacle was portable (Fretheim 1991:274). God is on the move, and so are his people, moving where He moves. The Presence was going to move from the top of the mountain to the tent in the midst of the people. The people will be united and sanctified by the Presence among them. This will be a beneficent and stabilizing Presence. The people will be identified by the Presence, so being a unique people among the nations. Their uniqueness will come not only by their possession, but also by their profession and practical holiness. Yahweh will be God to them, and will dwell among them. They will know that he is God, and they will make him known among the nations. This is the self-understanding and self-consciousness of the people of the Presence.

Politically, Israel saw themselves as a theocracy. Yes, a hierarchical structure of leadership also operated within this political setting, but Yahweh was their king and they his subjects. Yahweh is a beneficent king and they are the recipients of his kindness and faithfulness. They have committed themselves to be obedient subjects to their king. In their covenant relationship with the king, they understood that they too had covenant obligations, and promised Yahweh with united enthusiasm to obey his Law and to keep his covenant. Their socio-political self-consciousness recognized that they were a people united under the kingship of Yahweh.

It is safe to assume that Israel's community loyalty will already have been established in Egypt. They were connected by the certain solidarity that they were fellow-slaves. Community loyalty was challenged more and more by the redemption and covenant experiences they have had. There was now a loyalty to Yahweh that was expected; seen by the terms of the first commandment. There was a loyalty to the Covenant (which in fact was a loyalty to Yahweh) as this is what they promised to keep. They understood that a solely community loyalty was modified to include a loyalty in matters of faith. Community loyalty is, and must always be, subordinated to their loyalty to Yahweh. The Presence convinced them that their loyalty to Yahweh was in any case beneficial for the community. Later they would ask for the Presence as this is what characterized their new identity.

We conclude that the people of Israel saw themselves as a community united in their relationship with the suzerain, in this case Yahweh, with whom they are in a covenant made at Sinai. They saw themselves as a united community pledged to corporate obedience to Yahweh. In this regard Breuggemann aptly reminds us that the verb *obey* ("really listen") insists that biblical faith focuses on ethical reality (1994:837). Corporate obedience requires individual obedience too.

The people pledged themselves to resist any profanation of life that dismisses their relationship with Yahweh and with one another. They saw themselves as a holy nation united under Yahweh, and their holiness is perpetually derived from their covenant relationship with him. Their conduct of holy obedience to Yahweh is also based upon the stabilizing gifts of Presence and Law. Their covenant relationship with Yahweh is guaranteed to include future generations, providing a perpetual order of fidelity and renewal to and of the covenant. Their self-consciousness as a united people will serve them well when they face the hostile nations in the land they have inherited.

Principles:

Firstly, societal self-consciousness that recognizes the integrity of social institutions brings about social unity.

Secondly, social self-consciousness is enhanced by corporate-ness.

Thirdly, Presence enhances our community self-understanding and self-consciousness.

4B. Proposing a Socio-ethical Understanding within an Evangelical Ecclesiology Using the Socio-ethical Integration and Principles Derived from the Exodus Redemption Presence Narratives.

We have shown that as the Old Testament people of God, Israel's faith and theology can be imitated by the Church as the New Testament people of God. Theology and ethics are inseparable in the Bible. You cannot explain why and how the Israelites lived as they did until you see why and how they believed what they did (Wright 2004:17). The Old Testament Scriptures are also the Scriptures of the Christian Church, and therefore Israel's theology will for the most also be the Church's theology. If this is so, then the socio-ethical integration and principles for living which Israel applied as a community are principles that may also be applied in the Church. Obviously, the conditions between then and now are very different; therefore theology must be seen as having timeless principles. These timeless principles are what we may apply as the Church.

Our proposal will therefore find its basis in our theological observations from the Exodus redemption and Presence texts. There our findings were categorized under the headings *Revelation*, *Redemption* and *Relationship*. Here we shall use the categories **God** (*Theological*), **Man** (*Social/ Political*) and **World** (*Economic* – as it is applied from land). Each of our present headings will be integrated with the three categories of Revelation, Redemption and Relationship. Overlap and repetition are sometimes unavoidable. Moreover, moving from the general to specific, we shall

apply the principles enumerated from Israel's socio-ethical integration in the previous section under 4A above in a contemporary Evangelical Church context.

The critical questions posed in the area of social ethics are best articulated by Carl F. H. Henry (1964:15), and which must be considered here:

The Christian task force is divided today about the best method for improving social conditions. The problem may be stated this way: In seeking a better social order, to what extent shall we rely on *law* and to what extent on *grace*? How much shall we trust *legislation* and how much shall we trust *regeneration* to change the social setting? What should we expect the *state* to contribute, what should we expect the *church* to contribute, if we are seeking a society ruled by justice and love?

In our endeavor to consider these important questions, we must understand that the answers will be colored by what we presuppose as a method of social change. The methods available to bring about social change are *revolution*, *reformation* and *regeneration*. Regeneration as a method seeks to change the status quo. Evangelism and the dynamic of supernatural regeneration and sanctification in the individual have mostly been neglected as a method of seeking a better social order. The purpose of redemption is to bind man's will afresh to the purpose of the Creator. Reformation seeks to bring gradual but pervasive ethical amendment through democratic pressures. Revolution seeks a radical change through overthrow by compulsion and/or violence.

Evangelical Christians do not consider revolution as an option for social change. They set the social problem in the larger theological framework of divine revelation and redemption (Henry 1964:20). The Church derives her social message from divinely revealed principles. Man as the image of God is the highest motivation for social action and evangelism. Social action, on the one hand, must be congruent with our biblical worldview. Evangelism, on the other hand, is the basic method to bring about regeneration. Our aim is to establish model communities. Our opinion is that we must accept that while we can establish many model micro-communities in the Church through regeneration, we need reformation structures to affect society more broadly, and we must allow for a broader society that is largely secular in nature.

Holiness and love are the underlying principles for Old Testament ethics; concepts that must be applied to the Church because these have also become New Testament imperatives. Bruckner (2003:226) is correct in asserting that the term *holiness* has no content apart from its missional context (Ex.19:5-6). God's people were to be a blessing to all nations. The laws which underpinned holiness for Israel were always introduced with the statement of redemption: *I am the Yahweh who brought you out of the land of Egypt*. Our mission of redemptive action is also underpinned by this understanding; in providing a blessing to the world. Holy practices represented a contrast to the social practices in Egypt and Canaan back then, and today in the world at large. The desire to provide blessings is redemptive, and therefore an expression of love. As Christians we are to receive and to give love; or more inclusively stated, to receive and to give redemptive actions. Redemptive actions are also creative actions.

We must believe that society can change. Narrative discloses this reality and has the power to transform a community. The exodus narrative has the story of redemption that can transform the reader, and was used as a motivation in later Scripture to encourage social transformation through redemption. Fretheim (1996:230) puts it this way: "This move from slavery to worship ... is also about change for God." If change happened in the past, then it can happen in the future too. In this regard, Bruckner (2003:231) says that communities of faith become and remain ethical in the hope that God's salvation is always possible. Narrative was thus an ongoing motivation for social action and change.

The Church's own narrative, together with the biblical narrative, also serves as motivation for continued social action and change. We have a great history of social involvement (Schwambach 2008:123-125). Evangelical humanitarian effort in history, though spearheaded by evangelicals, came with the cooperation of the government. Examples are: the abolition of slavery, prison reform, Factories Acts for humane working conditions, child protection, against the cruelty to animals, education, healthcare, legislation, democracy, human dignity, private ownership, and many more can be demonstrated. Evangelicalism must, therefore, not have an

ahistorical thinking. In our history we have also made many mistakes, and must be willing to learn from them. Our history is filled with social success stories.

Yet, on the other hand in many contexts Evangelicals have had an apathetic attitude towards oppressive governments, often based on the understanding that church and state must be separated. The role of government is justice (law) and the role of the church is love (redemption). The Church must nevertheless inform justice. Justice has a preservative role, while redemption has a restorative role (Henry 1964:154). This separation, however, should not confuse righteousness and grace; or dilute justice with love. While we hold to the principle of freedom of conscience and choice, we are of the belief that Government needs the input of the Church and that the Church needs the cooperation of Government. There must be cooperation between Church and State to bring about social change.

i) Social Ethics as it Relates to God – Theological.

In the Old Testament ethics is fundamentally theological. Ethical issues are related to God as Creator and as Redeemer. The creation depicts his intentions and his redemptive acts depict his desire to be in relationship with fallen man. Fallen man has turned away from the divine creation intentions. Redemption is therefore the act of bringing back the creation intentions. The creation intention tells us who we are; we are created in the image of God for a relationship with him. The Exodus narratives bring out these aspects of redemption, creation and relationship when God revealed himself. Divine revelation is the basis for ethics; humans are not ethically autonomous, but they are ultimately accountable to God for he has created them (Wright 2004:32). Evangelical Christians subscribe to these tenets.

On the level of *revelation*; the revelation of God is a light to guide every member of God's community. Social ideals are always considerate of the nature of God (Henry 1964:146). His revelation demonstrates that he has acted and that he is continuously active among his people. Israel did not just emerge, but God called them for a purpose. The Church too has a teleological dimension to their calling as

God's people. God's holiness is thoroughly practical in its generosity, justice, integrity and considerateness, and can be emulated in order to meet that purpose. We too must be generous, just, unimpaired and considerate. God shows no partiality and he takes no bribes. He defends the cause of the weak and marginalized. We too must do just that.

The ethical teaching of Exodus is thoroughly theo-centric; it presupposes God's initiative in grace, redemption and law in Israel's history. God chose the historical route, and revealed himself as Yahweh, the Covenant-keeping God; and thereby, involved fallible humanity in the context of creation, redemption and witness. The historical route for Evangelicals includes the revelation of the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit in the life and witness of the Church. The historical route includes the cultural, and thus, societal dimensions. Israel and the Church's role is that of servant community; as having to be witnesses to the world of the Creator and Redeemer who is present with them. We are redeemed with an explicit redemptive purpose. God's long term goal with us was, in fact, his creative and redemptive intentionality.

Theology provides the impetus for ethics. God is not only served in the sacral realm but also in the social realm. Principally, faith in God is good for community stability and confidence. Faith finds its object in God. Faith is neither one-sided nor passive. Faith acts in religious and in socio-ethical ways. Faith recognizes that those things revealed about God can be imitated. Allegiance to God expresses itself in religious and socio-ethical ways. God's goodness can be expressed through his people, who are able to uphold God's creation and redemption intentions. Any anti-creation intention always opens one to inevitable judgment because creation will eventually turn against him.

Presence must be our departure point because Presence tilts towards justice. Dialogue with the Presence is an awesome enterprise in the process of the community's holiness. Holiness is ethical in content. Presence enhances our community self-understanding and self-consciousness. His presence among his people was to demonstrate that everybody was provided for by the Creator. His

action on their behalf was based on his love. He is patient, forgiving and faithful. He is compassionate, gracious and generous. That he is all these things to us is worth more than anything else. The presence of God in the midst of his people is more important than the gift of land. Without that Presence we cannot move towards the land. The worth of human life is infinitely above anything else because we have been made in his image.

Finally, revelation has to include the Scriptures too. Evangelicals have a high view of the Scriptures. The Bible has the transformative power for the practical lives of believers and the believing community. The Scriptures are a continuing resource for Christian ethos and ethics. Mouton (1997:249) correctly understands the Evangelical attitude; that an ethical reading of the Bible calls for continuous imaginative, Spirit-filled, critical and faithful reflection on the active presence and will of God in ever changing times and circumstances. Similarly, Lategan (1994:132) admits that the authority and transformative power of the Bible resides in the continuing encounter with the God mediated and stimulated by these texts. Its use as a resource for Christian ethos and ethics is a moral choice. The Scriptures have much to say about social-justice.

On the level of *redemption*: God's redeeming power was also an act of righteousness and calls forth a response of righteousness. We cannot undermine divine wrath, because it will subvert the concept of divine grace (Henry 1964:147). Having experienced justice, God's people too must show justice. God's people must demand justice. God is righteous as sovereign king and as supreme judge. We are ultimately accountable to our king and judge. He is the Creator of all, and all creation is accountable to him; the cosmic order and the social order. Creation is a powerful motivation for ethical interaction. In a monotheistic context man is accountable to God for the whole of his life. Accountability brings about ethical behavior. That is why we must live in acknowledgement of God. That acknowledgement cannot merely be cognitive; it must be relationally intimate and personal through revelation and redemption.

God is against anti-creation and anti-redemption forces. Whether those are active forces of oppression and exploitation or passive forces that do not propagate life and wholesome relationships, God sets himself against injustice. Maybe we cannot speak about an overthrow such as we saw in Exodus, but we can speak of a God who will let justice prevail – ultimately at the Judgment.

To what extent, then, must the Church emulate God? Motlabi (1999:93-95) correctly advises that the Church needs to be the prophetic voice in larger society, as it is adequately informed in the areas of theology, ethics and social discourse. It must understand the universal principles and moral issues arising out of the context in order to speak against injustices from an informed position. It must utilize every one of its expressions; its preaching, its writings and publications, its representations, and even in peaceful awareness campaigns. Schwambach (2008:132) exhorts against passive skepticism and encourages active responsibility. They must endeavor to be involved in every sphere of society – political, religious, social and economic. More importantly though, is its positive actions in upholding justice and practicing egalitarian and humanitarian tenets. This must be visible, chiefly, in the way the Church conducts itself within its own communities. The Church must be in a position to propose solutions to social problems. In short, theological ethics, which is the Church's forte, is an imperative for social ethics. More so, because the Church is a new creation in Christ, its members must be able to first apply among themselves the very ethical proposals they make to society.

Preaching against social ills, must not be taken as preaching “political” sermons. We cannot agree that extra-parliamentary protests had no place in a Christian society, or that a Christian must accept everything that government is saying and doing. Conscientious objection must always be an option for a believer. This writer's own denomination boasts the courage of one such a young man during the days of apartheid when military conscription was compulsory for white males. Peter Moll (*The Cape Times*, 05 December 1979) quoted the Baptist Confession of 1646 when he objected to being conscripted in the apartheid regime's forces:

It is the magistrate's duty to tender the liberty of men's consciences, without which all other liberties would not be worth naming. Neither can we forebear the doing of that, which our understandings and consciences bind us to do. And if the magistrate should require us to do otherwise, we are to yield our persons in a passive way to their power. But if any man shall impose on us anything that we see not commanded by our Lord Jesus Christ, we should rather die a thousand deaths, than to do anything against the light of our consciences.

In this regard, Frederick Hale (1992:77) cites Ellis Andre as saying: The Church's mandate extends beyond the preaching of the Gospel of personal salvation (seen in spiritual terms only) and includes temporal affairs such as justice and morality in society. It must also find social reconstruction programmes to support and participate in. A good example is the United Nations' Millennial Development Goals. They doubtlessly fit our redemptive programme, and we are able to enhance it with the power of the Gospel.

As Evangelicals our ethical intercourse has mainly been *deontological* in its approach. It is prescriptive and imitative, finding biblical rules and imitative fields for personal and social conduct in a literalistic way (Hale 2000:5-6). That is good and well for God's people, who should make the Scriptures the authoritative basis of their intercourse. If, however, we want to propose socio-ethical solutions to society at large, we must think of creative ways to apply the Scriptures more broadly to derive those solutions. We believe that ethics from narrative has the ability to be so applied; whether we consider consequences (*teleological ethics*) or the tenet of love in *situation ethics* in our ethical consideration. In practice, we may have to apply more than one approach, using biblical principles to provide answers. While the Bible does not offer a detailed blueprint, it is an important normative framework (Sider 2008:113). If we start with a normative framework derived from biblical revelation, then our socio-political agenda must reflect biblical balance.

If de Villiers' (1999:76) postulate is correct, then the Church needs to be involved in all four modes of moral discourse. 1. The prophetic mode, where a form of moral accusation and, possibly, condemnation is made and a utopian vision is provided. 2. The narrative mode, where narrative is used to shape the problem, providing a theological, educational and philosophical solution. The stories of suffering and the

stories of role models can certainly be found in the biblical narrative, as we have done in this dissertation from the Book of Exodus. 3. The ethical mode, where argumentation and analysis clarifies the concepts for informed solutions. 4. The policy mode is brought about by the people of position and power; the Church must be at the forefront of informing these influential people. It must, however, never be forgotten that the Church's chief task to the larger society is evangelism. Revelation and redemption are the best foundational principles to create God-pleasing, and, therefore also, beneficial relationships.

Being the *salt and light* of the earth has the same outcome as Israel's injunction in Exodus 19:5-6. Our witness should reach all people; churches, congregations, societies and nations. Our witness is evangelistic and ethical in nature. As Schwambach (2008:118) puts it, Christians are both *witnesses* and *instruments* of the Triune God acting in the world and acting to redeem. He reminds us (pp.134-135) that Evangelical social goals must be social justice; preservation of life and creation; human rights; dignity and welfare of all people; human development; political and religious freedom; order in society; peace and cooperation for good. The categories of Revelation, Redemption and Relationship should form an important framework to this end. Sider (2008:107) is adamant that we should not forget our political involvement for both practical and theological reasons. We must aspire to become ethically relevant on a global scale too, and therefore we must have global unity in terms of our ethical imperative. We need to cooperate in practical tasks, promoting common views on ethical questions.

William Wilberforce's example is one that demonstrates the effect the Christian voice can have in political spheres. John White (2008:166ff) recounts some of the important things he achieved in the name of Christianity. Wilberforce, himself having been influenced by the testimony of the former slave-trader, John Newton, had the conviction and calling to bring an end to slavery. Inspired by Newton to remain a member of parliament after his conversion in 1786, Wilberforce dedicated his political service to Jesus Christ, and had as his objectives the suppression of slavery and the reformation of manners in society. His kind of Christianity was convincing. Instead of speaking as judge, he spoke as convict. Being a compelling

speaker, he reminded many parliamentarians of their responsibility towards God, and persuaded them to vote in the name of principle for laws against slavery, drunkenness and blasphemy. Evangelicals can continue to have such an influence with such a demeanor.

There must be international Evangelical socio-ethical consensus and cooperation. Global consensus on political ethics could give tremendous power to our Christian witness and contribution to questions of international political ethics. We need leaders with a divine call to dialogue at international level; able to hear what our brothers and sisters from other countries are saying with respect to their political situation, and able to express a joint intra-evangelical statement that can serve as a guideline for a Christian ethical response in socio-political matters (Schwambach 2008:121). The political responsibility of the Church is too often articulated in criticism of the government; we need to be more positive by suggesting and providing solutions more often.

On the *relational* level, Henry (1964:151) correctly states: While God is Lord both of this world and the church; he rules the world and the church in different ways. Christ is not related to the world as Head of the Body; he rules the world by Law, and the church by Gospel. Obedience to God also implies obedience to others who are perpetuating his will. The environment for the law and obedience is redemption. The community can accept God's lordship through revelation and negotiation. God decides to redeem and we decide to "obey his voice". By this we are not saying that theocracy is the only acceptable form of government. Yes, it is the best, but God also blessed other forms of human government (Rom.13:1-7). We agree with Schwambach (2008:133) that the Church must submit to both the theocratic government and the instituted civil government, where the only civil disobedience is practiced *ultimo ratio* (Acts 4:19).

The relationship of the Church to God must be seen in the context of worship too. In Christian worship, we experience specific kinds of community, and we participate in specific kinds of practices (Smit 1997:262). Furthermore, holiness joins liturgy and justice – service of God has a bearing on the whole life of the

congregation and therefore includes service to each other and the world. De Gruchy (1986:105-106) correctly warns against false piety in worship:

The life and worship of churches, and the preaching of pastors, is often determined in practice much more by popular demands than by biblical and theological integrity. If the Church becomes a haven of refuge from responsibility in the world, if sermons are geared to massage the spiritual ego and sanction self-interest, if the liturgy whether traditional or contemporary becomes a mechanism of escape rather than the worship of God as Lord, and priest, preacher, and people somehow combine or conspire to make it so, then false piety not only flourishes, it becomes the norm.

Therefore, the congregation must proclaim God's redemption to humankind in both spiritual and practical ways, and its endeavor to do so is nothing less than the worship of him. They must practice what they preach – faith and action cannot be separated (Kretzschmar 1997:312). They do so by his power in the context of his presence with them.

ii). Social Ethics as it Relates to Man – Social / Political.

Revelation comes to man in various ways. God takes the initiative to reveal himself to man. He did so at Sinai and as he led the people of Israel. Revelation comes through creation, history, the Scriptures and ultimately in Jesus Christ. These are the expressions of *general* revelation and *special* revelation in Evangelical theology (Warfield 1959:74). Man can utilize these various expressions of revelation in their ethical discourse. We have been fortunate that God's revelation was also enscriptured.

For the Church the chief resource for ethical formulation and decision-making resides in their authoritative Scriptures, the Bible. In Thiessen's (1994:43) words, the Bible is the supreme source of Christian theology. The Bible is the Word of God; it is the Word of God in a derivative sense; through the processes of collection, copying and translation. The Bible must be understood as the only authoritative source for theological ethics.

Because the Bible is authoritative to Evangelical believers, they believe that both their private and their communal life must be regulated by principles from the Bible. Such are essentially ethical in nature. The Bible is the rule of our faith and practice; it is the dependable and inspired Word of God (Erickson 1983:221ff). It is the expression of God's will to us, and it possesses the right supremely to define what we are to believe and how we are to conduct ourselves. By the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, the Bible has a transformative power for the practical lives of believers and the believing community (Mouton 1997:249). This transformative power has an ethical outworking. We must dare to make ethical proposals from the Bible both for ourselves and for society at large.

The indwelling Holy Spirit and the biblical imperative of Christ-likeness finds its expression in ethical ways. The Presence has an ethical outworking which emulates God's character. For Evangelicals God's character is embodied in Christ-likeness, which is also the fruit of the Spirit (Gal.5:22f). So, while we cannot speak about a theophanic presence where we audibly hear God speaking as in the Exodus narrative, we can speak about God speaking in the Bible by his Holy Spirit to bring about the image of Christ to, in and through us. God speaks to us and in his speaking acts in a Trinitarian way.

The preaching of God's Word is the activity that enjoins godly and obedient living. Its effect on preacher and audience is profound. Fred Craddock (1991:24) says that because the preacher is expected to be a person of faith, passion and authority (faith makes him believable, passion makes him persuasive, and authority creates the right to speak), he can be expected to have a profound effect on his listeners. John Piper (2004:84) comments that God-preaching has the ability to stir up "holy affections" – things like hate for sin, delight in God, desire for holiness, and tender compassion. It aims at transforming the spring of behavior. We cannot agree more with Robinson that ultimately God is more interested in developing messengers than messages, and since the Holy Spirit confronts men primarily through the Bible, a preacher must learn to listen to God before he speaks for God (1991:26). The hearers of the Word through preaching are changed by the power of the Holy Spirit and the Word. That change is ultimately behavioral, and affects

both personal ethics and social ethics. Preaching, therefore, on a personal level creates the “desire for holiness”, and on a social level creates “tender compassion”. De Gruchy’s (1997:332) statement here is profound:

Thus faithfulness to the gospel means an ongoing commitment to the struggle for the just transformation of society. It is the task of the church to keep that hope alive through its participation in the mission of God to make all things new.

“Divine speech” for the Evangelical believer therefore comes through the testimony of the Scriptures, the guidance of the indwelling Holy Spirit, and the preaching of the Word. In this way we think of Presence.

Redemption is fundamentally a re-creating activity. We follow Fretheim (1991a:354) when he says that Exodus is to be understood in the light of Genesis and redemption and law in the light of creation. He continues to say that given the anti-creational forces incarnate Egypt and the Pharaoh, no simple local or historical victory will do; God’s victory must be in scope (1991a:357). The liberated nation began as an oppressed ethnic minority within a very powerful imperial state. Because Yahweh is king and not Pharaoh, Israel’s deliverance was made possible. The Egyptians violated the right of the Israelites, and the Israelites were never to act in the same way the Egyptians did. They were to identify with the suffering through empathetic and redemptive activities. They were not only bearers of redemption, but they were to be the model of what a redeemed community should be like (Wright 2004:62). The Church, living in obedience to God’s will in their social structure, aspirations, principles and policies, model a redeemed community. Like Israel, we are to live in holiness and justice before God and man.

We have to act with prudence. When we strive towards redemption, we know that grace must have a purpose beyond itself. That purpose has to do with identity. The identity of the redeemed community must also become the identity of a transformed community. Transformation is ongoing, developing the new creation into sanctification and confidence in order to perpetuate the redemptive-development cycle (Mouton 1997:250). The redeemed community must develop a prophetic stance against anti-creation attitudes, and thereby enhance the value and appreciation of renewal and redemption. People must become open to

welcome and propagate life-supporting measures, and they must become resistant to life-threatening ones. The redeemed community must be committed to an egalitarian and humanitarian agenda.

Old Testament ethics is a social affair. Even though it is often addressed to the individual, he is part of the community. Individual righteousness is aimed at the moral and spiritual health of the whole community (Wright 2004:57). Ethics must seek the greatest good for the greatest number. It must be aimed at maintaining social harmony and providing solutions to social problems (Mothlabi 1999:97). Decision-making was ultimately vested in the community.

On the *relationship* level, the Church is a redeemed community and has redeeming aims. Both their redemption and their redemption activity are centered in the Gospel. The Gospel is that which is able to save (Rom.1:16) and that which is able to transform (Phil.1:27). With this as the chief message of the Church, they are able to create a community of high moral standards, and so be an example to other communities. Their inroads to other communities must be motivated by their willingness to make the Gospel known; and because they are saved for good works (Eph.2:10), they must be socially active in accordance with what God intended for humanity (Snodgrass 1996:120-121). Their social responsibility and action must be defined by their understanding of Scripture. How will they interact socially?

Firstly, they must start with themselves and present themselves in a becoming and exemplary way. Gathered from our principles above, every community must be made up of people who have a sense of belonging. This will encourage community loyalty, and in turn, community harmony. Bacchiocchi (2007: online) supports this belief when he says: "Experience teaches that a person who does not belong to anyone or anything is in most cases unmotivated, rebellious, alienated and bitter toward all and everything. On the other hand, it is in a relationship of mutual belonging that a person experiences love, identity and security...." They will more easily agree on their shared beliefs, values and norms, so creating cohesion and solidarity. Sam Ndogo (2010b:n.p) pointedly suggests that our churches need to

move from mere multi-culturalism to inter-culturalism. By this he means cohesion and solidarity. Cohesion and solidarity cannot be achieved without the hearts of individuals willing to break down barriers created along cultural lines. We must be united as the community of Christ. Jackson (2005:14) comments:

South African congregations need to change in order to overcome our historical differences. The church often claims to have solutions for the nation. This is widely acknowledged as being the prophetic role that the church of Jesus Christ is called upon to play in a godless society. If that is the case, then the onus is on the church to demonstrate those solutions in such a way that the nation will come to the church to look for answers.

This kind of community will more easily organize itself, so allowing social hierarchical structures which facilitate social order, social justice and social unity. Societal self-consciousness that recognizes the integrity of social institutions brings about social unity. Equality and hierarchy can co-exist where it is based on role rather than class. Egalitarian aims must guard against building class and power structures.

An important aspect in the redemption story was the understanding of family. The Passover meal was to be celebrated in the family and in the nation of families. It also had the imperative to be commemorated from generation to generation forever. Families are to pass on the knowledge of God so that this global family would become a godly family (Moynach 1995:373). There was family and community loyalty. These are the foundational values for community. Healthy communities come from healthy families. Healthy families are families that are functional because the next generation has been trained by the present one, equipping them with life skills and more (Augsburger 1995:375). The family is the first place of education and training. The Church must be foremost in upholding functional and godly family perspectives and values. Fathers, mothers and children must fill their rightful place and role in the family. Dysfunctional families make for dysfunctional communities and societies. It is true that redemption in Exodus started with the family. The United Nations' MD Goals 3, 4 and 5 are covered here (<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/global.shtml>).

Community should never stifle individuality, and un-stifled individualism should never be allowed to stand in the way of community. Social consciousness and social self-consciousness is strengthened by corporate-ness rather than by individualism. In fact, individualism is more likely to lead to divisiveness, and consequently to social disorder. It will always be difficult to maintain the tension between personal and corporate. Revelation and redemption goes a long way to alleviate this inherent tension. Relationship, too, makes a valuable contribution in the areas of corporate identity and goals.

Leadership in a hierarchical structure inevitably has socio-ethical implications. Leaders must identify with their people. They must understand who their people are, and where they come from; what their aspirations are, and what stands in the way of them reaching their potential as God's people. They must be able to see the big picture and continually motivate their people towards fulfillment. Recognizing their personal limitations, and yet not allowing their inadequacies to paralyze their calling, leaders must show readiness for the tasks of re-creation and judgment. They must always be willing to surrender their concerns of personal autonomy and of self-preservation for the sake of the people and community fulfillment.

Secondly, de Villiers (1999:81) perceptively asks: Are we to impose the Christian way upon the world? No, we cannot and should not, even though we know that it is good for them. All must be allowed the freedom of conscience and belief; this indeed is a fundamental Evangelical belief. We cannot deny non-Christians their rights. The supernatural Creator has established a transcendent truth and objective justice. The non-Christians must, however, be made aware of their accountability to God. The Christian community which recognizes and accepts that accountability needs to be a model, and therefore the conscience of the world, motivating them to heed the divine imperatives. They must be exposed to the Gospel of God's love and redemption through Christ.

Thirdly, the Church must function in society taking into account the cultural context and the socio-political agenda of the Government. It is within that context that we must find relevance that is also God-honoring. Richardson is correct in admitting

that the interaction of Christianity and African culture (for instance) has been and continues to be dramatic. New and sometimes unexpected forms of church life and liturgy, and theological insights have emerged and gained (1997:373). The Church must be willing to engage in ethical discussion in the interest of having a Christian identity of unity without necessarily discarding one's cultural identity. Where some cultural things clash with the faith, there must be a willingness to negotiate the issues honestly without breaching our understanding of the Word of God.

Fourthly, the Church has made significant contributions to the development of democratic theory and praxis. This contribution must be seen as an ongoing process, as democracy finds new applications all the time. There must be a relationship between democracy and ecclesiology. The Church is to be the voice in society which must see that the democratic vision is kept in line with the prophetic vision and in which society can know the reality of God's *shalom* (de Gruchy 1997:323). They must therefore counter the sins of racism and any form of injustice, teaching and demonstrating an alternative way through a redemptive social reconstruction. That would mean that the Church cannot sidestep a socialist agenda in its praxis and egalitarian quest. Yet, whatever the Church has to give must invite free-will acceptance.

Fifthly, the Church must be part of the religio-ethical debates and discussions in society. While Evangelicalism is in agreement that the state should not give preference to any one religion, it must represent those who want religion in the public place. Kinghorn and Kotze (1997:406) in their survey have discovered that there is, for instance, a sizeable majority in South Africa, even among the non-religious, who want religious instruction as part of the school curricula. Yes, we say no preferential treatment, but also no exclusion. The advantages will manifest itself in ethical expression. We must tell Pharaoh (the government) that we want to "go and worship" freely, as this is the beginning of the redemptive purpose. The problem is that often the Church cannot adequately present its case, because they are not united, not interested, or not equipped to present our argument.

Therefore the Evangelical Church needs to have a united view on social ethical theory and so be able to make godly proposals for solutions to social problems. We must realize that voices make a difference, and a voice speaking God's heart for the world will make a phenomenal difference (Corbett 2009:18). We must expose people to the issues and solutions from an early age. We must develop young Christians with a heart for social justice wherever they are. We must help them live ethically. Corbett continues to say that in the consumerist context, living ethically is simply about living with an awareness of the social and environmental costs of our lifestyle (p.16). The point is that the Church must serve as an awareness-raising instrument in socio-ethical matters.

Sixthly, according to Sider (2008:107) the Church needs to answer the complex social questions by encouraging a lot of thinking in areas such as the role of the state, the nature of human freedom, and the purpose and limitation of laws, in order to enter the sophisticated discussions with a biblically grounded and informed political philosophy. In Schwambach's (2008:127) words, politics is a legitimate subject of general ethics and of Christian ethics, because politics works to form public life on levels of governments, churches, schools, universities, trade unions, etc.

The Evangelical church, therefore, needs to get involved through social and political cooperation in modes prophetic and policy. We can become involved in the government's new programme of social reconstruction by proposing solutions that are biblically grounded. De Villiers reminds us that the task of "liberating" South Africa is unfinished (1999:82). Mothlabi's comment is valuable, when he says that government's chief motivation to establish its social programme must come through the teaching of social ethics (1999:99). The Church can partner with government in that very endeavor.

We can become involved in the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDG) (<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/global.shtml>). These goals align to some extent with our creative/redemptive goals given in the Lausanne Covenant. In September 2000 the UN defined its eight development goals for 2015 as follows:

1. To eradicate extreme poverty and hunger;
2. To achieve universal primary education;
3. To promote gender equality and empower women;
4. To reduce child mortality;
5. To improve maternal health;
6. To combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases;
7. To ensure environmental sustainability;
8. To develop a global partnership for development.

A summit in New York to happen on 20-22 September 2010 will encourage stakeholders to accelerate progress towards these goals. Eminent Church leaders can become involved in the MDG Advocacy Group promoting the implementation of the goals.

Finally, as the Church we must seriously make volunteerism a mode of social action. There are so many areas where we can be involved and to make ourselves and our testimony visible in society. Our visibility is aimed at setting an example in the community; whether doing mundane things such as organizing drives to pick up litter, having feeding schemes, helping at under-resourced government hospitals and schools, doing relief work at old-age homes and orphanages, helping out at special welfare institutions, and creating own social projects or helping in other projects. Certainly, as Evangelicals we must always use whatever opportunity of involvement to share the Gospel of Christ's redemption with the lost.

We thus summarize that the Church's socio-political involvement must be as broadly expressed as possible. They need to be an exemplary community and thus attracting others to emulate their ways. As a community they are welcoming, egalitarian, in harmony, pro-actively involved, and having members that are loyal to its tenets and identity, operating within the framework of biblical love. They must fulfill a teaching role in society; teaching the will of God in society, promoting freedom of conscience, teaching the ideas of democracy, teaching ethical (personal, religious, social and political) ideas, and teaching organizational skills for social cooperation and projects. This enhances the United Nations' MDG number 2, but we must propagate the aim that all children are provided with at least a

primary education (<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/education.shtml>). In doing all these things, our agenda must always be to raise Christian awareness in the areas of *revelation*, *redemption* and *relationship*.

iii). Social Ethics as it Relates to World (Land) – Economic.

Creation and redemption have an economic dimension. If that is so, then already we have an economic construct that includes *revelation* and *redemption*. Actually, the line between revelation and redemption in economic discussion is blurred. The divine statement, “the whole earth is mine” (Ex.19:5) immediately connects the discussion on economics to God. God’s ownership of everything makes our activities that utilize the resources of God’s earth, accountable to him. Our use of what he has given us cannot be haphazard and without any concern for his creation and redemption intentions. Under the concept of revelation, we must answer the question about the scope of God’s creation and redemption intentions. Walter Kaiser (1990:415) sees God’s first intention as that of blessing; particularly of his people.

The exodus, Israel’s *redemption*, was liberation for economic independence (Wright 2004:156). What awakened God’s concern was Israel’s outcry under economic oppression and injustice. This was contrary to God’s intention of blessing his people, and making them a blessing to the nations too. Besides the Covenant promises made to them, economic oppression was perhaps the key motivation for Israel’s redemption. Economic exploitation through forced labor caused God to respond. Redemption is God’s justice in action.

It is true that the line between *redemption* and *relationship* is also blurred. Exploitation and oppression from either point of view was unacceptable. The intrinsic value of humans, who are of greater value than things, disallows exploitative and oppressive practices. Every human has the right to be free, but that freedom is always limited by the vision of community. Exploiting workers and degrading working conditions cannot go unpunished. The first MDG seeks to achieve decent work for all so that workers may not be forced into vulnerable

employment (<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/poverty.shtml>). Exploitation and oppression are supported by the unethical spirit of superiority, domination, ruthlessness and greed. Every person was worthy of fair remuneration and working conditions. There must be a rhythm between work and rest for all living creatures involved in work. Egalitarian and humanitarian principles must always be upheld in the places of economic activity.

God's answer to Israel's lack of self-determination, geographic sovereignty, a paralyzing victim-mentality, and bondage-structure could only be found in Presence (revelation) and redemption. Here they found the source to become productive, resourceful and empowered; the source of justice on the one hand, and of the Promised Land on the other. Revelation and redemption were the answers, providing the freedoms of self-determination, geographic sovereignty because God gives land, and productive empowerment.

The land that was promised Israel would be a divine gift and it would have divine ownership. He was going to give them a land of plenty as we see in the superlative expression, "milk and honey". The very leading of God in the pillar was first to himself (at Sinai), and then on to the land he has promised. They had land because the Lord had given it to them. The Lord could give it to them because, as Creator, the whole earth was his, and it is his to give. Man was given dominion over the land, and man, a creature above all others, has the God-given task to rule creation well. The presence of God in their midst was a gift greater than the gift of land, and was that which enabled him to execute this God-given task.

The gift of land and the God-given task to rule it well, gave shared access to its natural resources, thereby creating work, growth, trade and prosperity, sharing in its productive capabilities and wealth. Negatively applied, conflict over resources could bring corruption in work, uncontrolled growth and unfair distribution of wealth. Community economic well-being must be sought over individual economic well-being. The well-being of the individual is vested in the well-being of the community.

In an agrarian society, land was a necessity for economic subsistence in which the family of mainly parents and children provided the labor to work the land and keep the animals (Matthews & Benjamin 1993:37). The two economic resources were land and children. Both, land ownership and children were seen as a blessing from Yahweh. The labor of every worker was the property of the household (Matthews & Benjamin 1993:12). While this is okay for subsistence farming, there must be a place for small scale and commercial farming. Commercial farming and small scale farming must be encouraged for ongoing food security, as well as for creating jobs in a rural environment.

In an industrialized and technological context skills must be acquired in order to have that needed individual and family subsistence at least. The means to do so is generally through education and training. Education and training must be provided on four levels, namely, family, self, community and government. The first sphere of influence is always the family, but there has to be a willingness displayed by the individual to learn. Fathers must teach their sons skills and a good attitude to work; and mothers their daughters. Community and society at large create the “market” and the institutions of learning, thereby opening to the individual the economic role he/she is to play in society. Besides being the prophetic voice to the family, individual, society and government in economic matters, the Church community can play an important role in the training of people, especially in the areas of entrepreneurship, leadership and integrity. The Government must create a system that encourages the just use and distribution of resources and entrepreneurship.

Within this context, the Church can become instrumental in facilitating what is called social-entrepreneurship (SAfm, *AM-live* talk show of 27/8/2010). That is creating labor cooperatives, where especially unskilled and disabled people are empowered. Small and medium enterprises (SME’s) are important job creators. Some of the skilled church members can provide training in the areas of social-entrepreneurship and SME development. In fact some churches are even able to provide the capital for social-entrepreneurial enterprise for their unemployed members.

We would be remiss if we did not speak about capitalism as an economic system. There are two types of capitalism according to Pope John Paul II.¹¹⁹ Firstly, there is an economic system that recognizes the role of business, the market, private property and the responsibility of production and human creativity. Secondly, there is the freedom in the economic sector, not circumscribed within a strong juridical framework and religious social ethical framework. The second one can be dangerous and anti-democratic in character, and unless non-market institutions and mechanisms are put in place, the open global society that prevails at present is likely to prove a temporary but disastrous phenomenon (Litonjua 1999:224). The Church, as a non-market institution, can certainly be a prophetic voice in this regard, urging companies to implement the *triple-bottom-line* of financial-social-environment profit. The triple-bottom-line is an ethical way for corporations of looking at their bottom lines, and the Church can urge Government to legislate it or to enforce hefty fines on companies who do not comply. Every project will require proper social and environmental impact studies. We cannot go on exploiting resources without understanding the mechanisms of renewal.

Let's explain a little. What does global capitalism do? Finance capital thrives on debt and speculation. Fortunes are made and lost in financial markets without reference to productive activity. There is global competitiveness and the large corporate companies are going where they find the highest profits and the cheapest labor. Capital has triumphed and labor has been betrayed. Greider (1998:78) reckons that governments have become subservient to the demands of global corporations, because national economic performance has become the ultimate legitimating of governance. He continues to say that the most democratic country, United States of America, is now "a democracy for hire". It is held captive by money and the ideas that money can buy. These global corporations have no loyalty to their laborers, their customers, and their countries, except the almighty bottom line. We must insist on accountability here.

¹¹⁹ Sited by Litonjua (1999:128)

While it was thought that democracy and capitalism were compatible in that it seeks the freedom of the individual, it is indeed incompatible because democracy also seeks equality of individuals. We can only hope that capitalism will not subvert the democratic foundation of equality. At least there is now a re-thinking of capitalism since the global financial meltdown of 2009/2010. In our recovering, the world has to think more carefully about encouraging a more equitable form of wealth distribution. It is beginning to think more seriously about the ecological, social and religious foundations of the life system on planet earth. Blankenhorn (1995:83) has noticed that the market has affected religious traditions and communities – the church may reconfigure itself and its values into something of a knockoff of the culture industries, and by embracing the advertizing and marketing strategies of hyping the gospel. This kind of capitalism only exploits the poor, and the Church must help create awareness which guards against such exploitation.

That every family should have enough was demonstrated by the preparations for the Passover in the Exodus narrative. Social stability starts with the family. God saw the importance of family in his redemptive activity. Wright (2004:341) makes an important observation from Exodus; redemption was from genocidal intrusion; the family covenant sign happened in the circumcision of boys on the eighth day; the Passover was a family ritual in perpetual remembrance; the consecration of every firstborn was a generational aspect; and the Decalogue speaks about parental authority, sexual integrity and social viability. The family was the ethical teaching substrate for the community. Kinship and family structure is a key factor in preventing and/or alleviating poverty. The church as an extended family must play a similar role.

Global capitalism is not the main villain in Africa, but corruption and greedy misappropriation of resources by African leaders, warlords and politicians. Africa has been blessed with almost inexhaustible resources. David Lamb's list counting Africa's blessings is cited by Ayittey (1999:5-6):

... a continent with immense and untapped mineral wealth, Africa has 40% of the world's potential hydro-electric power supply; the bulk of the world's diamonds and chromium; 30% of the uranium in the non-communist world; 50% of the world's gold; 90% of its cobalt; 50% of its phosphates; 40% of its

platinum; 7.5% of its coal; 8% of its known petroleum reserves; 12% of its natural gas; 3% of its iron-ore; and millions upon millions of acres of untilled land....

Yet, now we have increasing and unprecedented poverty in Africa. Scores of people in sub-Saharan Africa live on less than one dollar a day. More than 15000 Africans die daily of preventable diseases (Sachs 2005:xvi). One still wonders whether we will reach the UN Millennium Goals for Africa to reduce poverty to half by 2015. Why? It is because of political dysfunction and greed. The Church needs to continue finding ways to be the moral voice in our African society.

Colonialism has robbed us of much of these resources in the past. So has a lack of skills to beneficiate or add value left us to sell our raw materials, just to have to buy it back in the form of products that cost so much more. But now, having recognized our need to add value to our raw materials, Adadevoh (2006:53) reminds that God calls African Christians to do their part in producing what they consume; and even to export. We must harness and encourage both formal and informal sectors to achieve this. The Church is in a good position to “spread the word” of adding value through the innovative and creative use of our labor. We must do as Sachs exhorts; to encourage our people to break out of that dependency syndrome and to take responsible action (2005:20). Africans must develop a “production mindset” (Ndogo 2010a).

There is to be a healthy view of work in the community of God. The Israelites were intent on serving Pharaoh well, but he was intent on exploiting them. Ndogo (2010a:4) in his insightful paper, “The Promotion of a Production Mindset Towards Poverty Reduction in Africa” shows that combining the spiritual transformation ideology, mediated by the Church’s redemption message, and a production mindset according to the Scriptures, poverty can be reduced in Africa. A good work ethic can be inculcated over time. There, the community and the Church can work in partnership to promote a good work ethic. Christianity must always motivate and teach their members to work hard and to work smart – “as unto the Lord”.

In South Africa, our main problem is to address the economic imbalances. We have been liberated politically, but not economically. Transformation in the South African economy is a challenge to all of us, and the Church must consider themselves party to meeting this challenge. Nürmberger (1999a:125-147) encourages the Church to develop an economic vision which is able to provide direction in our particular challenge. He enumerates aspects that are to be part of this vision, namely; *ecological sustainability* through environmentally friendly and renewable ways, a *healthy livelihood* for all through the availability of food, clothing and housing, *equitable distribution* where nobody should suffer want, concern for the weak and vulnerable where we care for the disabled, aged and orphaned, and the disciplined lives of all. This would also be in line with the United Nations' MD Goal 7 (<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/environ.shtml>). We have to reflect on what it is we really want – quick fixes and fleeting thrills, or the self discipline and hard work necessary to lay the long term foundations of equity and quality of life for all and for coming generations. We must build a common loyalty, a common set of values and a common will, in order to stand up against the anti-creation forces of ruthless advertisers, the drug culture, the crime syndicates, the great cartels, etc. Churches, political parties and educational institutions must combine to inculcate wide horizons, inter-generational responsibility and a more sustainable value system. The Church must use its considerable moral authority. They must become the redemptive community in South Africa by engaging and reflecting; actions and teaching.

The Israelites were expected to work for six days and keep the Sabbath on the seventh day. Work must be fair in reward and in rest. Work must not degrade man to being a mere machine or a number. Christians are to serve God and neighbor. Bacchiocchi (2007: online) connects the Sabbath and redemption: “The believer who on the Sabbath stops his *doing* to experience his *being* saved by divine grace renounces human efforts to work out his own salvation and acknowledges his belonging to God, the author and finisher of salvation”. The Sabbath is not an object or a place accessible only to a few, but a time available to all. Sabbath is a commitment to non-exploitation. Sabbath is a leveling mechanism. Here we are

particularly mindful of the United Nations' Millennium Development Goal number 8 (<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/global.shtml>).

We ought to be diligent and do what we do “as unto the Lord” (Col.3:17). Work is a calling for the Christian; wherever he works, even in a secular context, he is in the service of God. Therefore the believer recognizes the dignity of work; not as an unfortunate alternative to leisure, or simply as a necessity for subsistence or acquisition. We have been given the privilege being co-creators through work. Good work ethic motivates social responsibility because it prevents poverty.

Poverty was a community concern. The preventable causes of poverty were the community's business. Laziness, corruption, excess and exploitation must be fought. Koptak (2003:188) argues that laziness is a failure of love; work was a means to provide for self and loved ones, the loafer wanted to be carried. The lazy person was not a burden-bearer; he was not in community. Corruption is worse because it causes poverty in others; it is gain by dishonesty and exploitation combined. Excess is born of greed for material things and pleasure, being void of prudence and consideration. Exploitation is a form of oppression for economic gain. All these lack love. The Church needs to teach about the nature of true love.

Poverty from natural causes should only be temporary; but if it persists, the community and society at large must take responsibility by aiding the destitute. The exodus was a prototypical event in removing the poor from a system of oppression. Those who must take action are not necessarily those responsible for the problem, but they are responsible under God. Judicial equity is also a key factor in preventing poverty. Ultimately, God will come against us who are careless about the poor, for the poor so easily become invisible and inaudible to us.

The Church, as the people of God, must be and act in ways that represent God. They must set the example of a people who are attached to a holy God. Indicatively and imperatively their response to God must reflect love and integrity, both among themselves and to the world. God is love (1Jn. 4:16) and therefore because we have received his revelation, ought to relate to God and to others in

love. God is altogether righteous (Ps. 7:11) and therefore we must be righteous in all our ways and relationships. If, on the horizontal plane, we live in love and righteousness, our socio-ethical expression will be God-pleasing and worthy of his self-revelation to us. Our socio-ethical expression will strive for the equality, dignity and freedom of humanity in our religious, social, economic and political outlook, and our eco-ethical expression will strive for prudent stewardship. The programmes and institutions we as the Church promote and support, must also promote and support the principles of equity, dignity, freedom, prudence, stewardship and integrity.

CONCLUSION

God is ontologically *omni-present*, yet he is spoken of as being present or even being absent. The presence and the absence of God are relational concepts. His presence generally shows his favor and is for the benefit of his people; and his absence indicates his disfavor. But sometimes his presence was for judgment. The people of God are his people precisely because he is favorably disposed towards them. God's presence with his people bestows upon them a special position in relation to him, and a blessed future for them.

God is Spirit, and his presence is not limited to visible forms. Many times God's presence is simply indicated by divine speech. God's presence is symbolized in different ways, and some of these symbolisms are expressed in forms. We have seen that God chose at times to reveal himself through theophanies, and these appearances related to humans in different ways. Finally, God revealed himself in the person of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. The Word, who is God, revealed himself in the flesh full of glory and truth (Jn.1:14). For the Christian, Christ dwells with us and within us by his Spirit and through him we have access to the Father (Eph.1:18).

The presence of God is redemptive. Israel was redeemed by the present God, Yahweh; and the Christian has been redeemed by the present God, the Lord Jesus. As Evangelicals we believe that they are one and the same person, and the method of redemption is metaphorically equated in the New Testament. Those in Christ, however, have an inward power to live an obedient life. The Christian is empowered by the Holy Spirit and a new creation; two inseparable concepts that give us our identity. While Israel was redeemed as a nation, we are a redeemed people who are individually united in the Church of Jesus Christ; and in our local assemblies we are to maintain and reflect our unity by being a community. As Israel was a nation *for* the nations, so the Church is a community of witnesses to God's righteousness and rule for the nations. The Church must therefore live and lead by example. They are an ethical community fostering ethical interaction between humans and God, humans and other humans, and humans and creation.

Humans are to relate to God as Creator and as Redeemer, because they are accountable to him according to his creation and redemption (or re-creation) principles. Accountability is meaningful only in an ethical context. Man relates to God by acts of obedience to his creation and redemption intentionality. The chief duty of the Church is to make known the available person, purpose and power of God.

God's loving expression is his availability for a relationship with man. His self-revelation and gifts are for our benefit. His creation and creative intentions are for our benefit. His redemption and redemptive intentions are for our benefit. While his gifts are free, he will hold each one of us accountable for what he has made available for us. More so, we are accountable for the imperative to perpetuate God's creation and redemption intentions. If they are expressions of love and intended to benefit, then they are ethical in nature. Our response to God and to creation at large must therefore also be ethical in nature.

Our concern in this dissertation is to realize the socio-ethical significance of the Presence in redemption for the people of God, and in particular for the Evangelical Church. Having explored the Exodus texts from a *synchronic* approach, and from a

canonical perspective, we have used the final canonical Exodus-narrative of Presence through socio-rhetorical and theological reflection to derive socio-ethical principles for our contemporary application. These principles are applied in specific contemporary contexts and questions in order to posit ethical social proposals, social responsibility, and social action.

We were able to see how our Exodus pericopes were employed in the biblical Old and New Testaments. Their use in the Psalms, Prophets and New Testament reflected an authoritative theological interpretation of these Exodus texts for Evangelicals, merely because they are in the Bible. These Scriptural theological interpretations were a warrant for us to seek a theological interpretation of the canonical texts as the platform for socio-ethical interaction. Because we are so far removed temporarily, socio-ethical transfer from then to now was by no means cut-and-dried. Only through theological reflection are we able to derive socio-ethical principles for contemporary application, at least within an Evangelical Ecclesiology. If we are able to do this, we are able also to extend such application in broader contexts; certainly with some limitations because the broader contexts do not have the empowering Presence as do believers.

Presence was applied theologically under the categories *revelation*, *redemption* and *relationship*. We were able to show how the categories of revelation, redemption and relationship related God and his people in ways that gave them a special identity as a community that must respond in a special and particular way to God and within itself. The people had to be monotheistic. Their response had monotheistic ethical implications and social implications.

Presence was also applied socially under the categories derived naturally from the Exodus narrative:

11. Israel's Self-Consciousness as a Community.
12. Yahweh's Presence and the Community's Redemption.
13. Yahweh's Agent in the Redemption of the Community.
14. Counter Forces to the Creation of the Redeemed Community.
15. Covenant and Redemption Undergirds Social Identity.

16. The Socio-ethical Response of the Redeemed Community.
17. Redemption as Social Dialogue.
18. Covenant as Societal Establishment.
19. Covenant and Societal Conflict.
20. Covenant and Societal Self-consciousness.

These categories were discussed under the same sub-categories, namely, *revelation*, *redemption* and *relationship*. We were able to derive socio-ethical principles in this way; principles which could be applied in an Evangelical ecclesiology.

Indeed, the Church was the best social context in which these principles could be applied, and within that context we were able to derive socio-ethical proposals. The Church is posited as a multiplicity of microcosmic communities, all related to God through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. We were able to make social proposals for the kind of social responsibilities and actions required within the church community. These socio-ethical proposals must emanate from the social vision of the Church, which is theological and eschatological in nature.

We are of the belief that the Church, as an eschatological community, must serve as an example and vision for society at large, recognizing that society at large also has a different and more complex make-up, and that socio-ethical transfer of Christian principles is not simplistically cut-and-dried. We have to find creative ways to translate the biblical imperative in a contemporary social context. This, we have concluded is only possible because we were able to apply it from and in a narratological context. We could however not simply use the same categories of revelation, redemption and relationship in a socio-ethical application.

Ethics in general and social ethics in particular needed to be considered according to categories that were naturally attached to ethical discourse. But these categories were also to be integrated with the theological categories in such a way that does not strain the ethical discourse. Surprisingly, the ethical categories of *God* (theological), *man* (social/political) and *land* (economic) easily lent itself to be discussed with the sub-categories of revelation, redemption and relationship. In

fact, while it was fairly easy to do so under the *theological* and *social/political* categories, it was not so easy to distinguish the sub-categories for discussion under *economy*. We were forced to blur the lines between revelation and redemption on the one hand, and between redemption and relationship on the other.

We could obviously not make proposals dealing with every socio-ethical issue. This was not our intention. We were, however, able to provide a socio-ethical vision for the Church, and thus, to a limited extent, for society at large. Because of our socio-ethical vision, it has become necessary for us to sketch the Church as an eschatological people which is a blessing to the world by its functioning in particular roles; as example (salt and light), evangelist, prophetic voice, teacher, agent, facilitator, negotiator, and partner.

As example the Church is meant to be a pattern for society. Yes, we know that this is the ideal, but here is a community living in unity, yet having and encouraging diversity. Here we have a community who lives by the principles of peace and justice; they are able to do so by the power of the Holy Spirit maintaining the unity in the bond of peace (Eph.4:8). Here is a community who has equity and recognizes that leaders and all are ultimately accountable to God. This community knows how to care for their own members and for others who are destitute because they understand the value of humanity. Here is a community that understands how to function as a body where the “least” functional role has as much value as the member who has an “important” role. Here we have an eschatological community who lives with a future perspective to individual and community existence. We can mention more points of example, but a Church who founds its indicative and imperative values upon the biblical text, can be a blessed pattern to society.

As evangelist, the Church alone has the message of redemption, and it needs to share it with society. The values of creation can only be revived in a redemptive context. It is more important for the Church to be such a voice that brings about a new creation, first in the individual and then in the community. The most important

function of the Church in the world is to evangelize them. They are first and foremost witnesses of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. The best way for society to change is through regeneration. Our first priority is to extend the Kingdom of God through the message of Jesus Christ and then through our godly influence.

As prophetic voice, the Church must make known God's will and ways. It is mainly a voice that speaks to issues of social justice, responsibility and reconstruction. Aspects of oppression, exploitation and other injustices must be condemned, and proposals for redress, reparations and reconstruction must be made. The Church is in a position to make proposals for egalitarian and humanitarian principles in religious, social, political and economic spheres. The Church must be a voice for the poor and marginalized in society. They must be the voice for the voiceless. The Church must entrench democratic values and be the voice that calls for integrity and accountability.

As teacher, the Church is quite influential in society. Their first place of teaching must be on a theological plane. Theological awareness encourages moral and ethical awareness. Specific socio-ethical awareness can become an important educating sphere for the Church. Together with its family and church-community accomplishments, the Church is an important source of proven knowledge and experience in community. They can teach democratic principles. They can teach inter-personal relations. In short, they can teach on a whole range of issues that encourages good relationship, both vertically and horizontally. The Church can even expand their teaching influence to include skills training for life improvement. The Church can train leaders of integrity.

As agent, the Church can act in society on behalf of Government, business and other organizations who have projects that aim at Christian-likeminded outcomes. Conversely, they can also act as agent for the people and community interests. They can act as volunteers for these organizations. The Church can do welfare activities expressing the social concern of these other organizations, where they use these activities to reach out evangelistically. The Church can mobilize volunteers for community upliftment activities; a current example is healthcare and

education volunteers during industrial action in those sectors. The Church must be the redemptive agent in society.

As facilitators, the Church facilitates important co-operations; with Government, business and other organizations. The Church must facilitate truth and reconciliation. The Church can facilitate socio-ethical debates. The Church can facilitate social and cultural forums. They can facilitate community projects, providing human resources, venues, and the like. They can facilitate socio-ethical policy-making and awareness workshops. The Church can facilitate economic proactive projects. They can facilitate individual, community and social prosperity and well-being. We can facilitate prudent stewardship of our resources. They can facilitate ecological and environmental awareness campaigns. To this end the Church must preach and act.

As negotiators and partners, the Church can act on behalf of the poor and the marginalized. The Church need not chose between the rich and the poor, because it and society need them both and both need the Church. The rich and the poor are to act according to the tenets of love and justice. The Church can help inculcate these tenets, and to teach tenets of good work-ethic. Brotherhood where love and goodness are central must be fostered in and by the Church. The Church must be a redeemed people with redemptive aims; all for the glory of their redeeming God.

We conclude by aligning ourselves with the universal Evangelical consensus in the Lausanne Covenant of 1974 and its statements on Christian Social Responsibility (statement 5), Education and Leadership (statement 11) and Freedom and Persecution (statement 13), which is better stated in full:

We affirm that God is both the Creator and the Judge of all people. We therefore should share his concern for justice and reconciliation throughout human society and for the liberation of men and women from every kind of oppression. Because men and women are made in the image of God, every person, regardless of race, religion, color, culture, class, sex or age, has an intrinsic dignity because of which he or she should be respected and served, not exploited. Here too we express penitence both for our neglect and for having sometimes regarded evangelism and social concern as mutually exclusive. Although

reconciliation with other people is not reconciliation with God, nor is social action evangelism, nor is political liberation salvation, nevertheless we affirm that evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty. For both are necessary expressions of our doctrines of God and man, our love for our neighbor and our obedience to Jesus Christ. The message of salvation implies also a message of judgment upon every form of alienation, oppression and discrimination, and we should not be afraid to denounce evil and injustice wherever they exist. When people receive Christ they are born again into his kingdom and must seek not only to exhibit but also to spread its righteousness in the midst of an unrighteous world. The salvation we claim should be transforming us in the totality of our personal and social responsibilities. Faith without works is dead. (Statement 5)

We confess that we have sometimes pursued church growth at the expense of church depth, and divorced evangelism from Christian nurture. We also acknowledge that some of our missions have been too slow to equip and encourage national leaders to assume their rightful responsibilities. Yet we are committed to indigenous principles, and long that every church will have national leaders who manifest a Christian style of leadership in terms not of domination but of service. We recognize that there is a great need to improve theological education, especially for church leaders. In every nation and culture there should be an effective training programme for pastors and laity in doctrine, discipleship, evangelism, nurture and service. Such training programmes should not rely on any stereotyped methodology but should be developed by creative local initiatives according to biblical standards. (Statement 11)

It is the God-appointed duty of every government to secure conditions of peace, justice and liberty in which the Church may obey God, serve the Lord Jesus Christ, and preach the gospel without interference. We therefore pray for the leaders of nations and call upon them to guarantee freedom of thought and conscience, and freedom to practice and propagate religion in accordance with the will of God and as set forth in The Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We also express our deep concern for all who have been unjustly imprisoned, and especially for those who are suffering for their testimony to the Lord Jesus. We promise to pray and work for their freedom. At the same time we refuse to be intimidated by their fate. God helping us, we too will seek to stand against injustice and to remain faithful to the gospel, whatever the cost. We do not forget the warnings of Jesus that persecution is inevitable. (Statement 13)

<http://www.lausanne.org/covenant>

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ABBREVIATION

FULL REFERENCE

BDB	- <i>Enhanced Brown, Driver and Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon.</i>
Genesius	- <i>Genesius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament.</i>
HGK	- <i>Dictionary of Bible Languages with Semantic Domains. Hebrew.</i>
NASB	- <i>New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries.</i>
Strong's	- <i>Enhanced Strong's Lexicon.</i>
TWOT	- <i>Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament.</i>

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