Key Ideas on Exodus

Source: *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, Robert Alter & Frank Kermode, eds.

Specific author of “Exodus” chapter: J. P. Fokkleman

1. Exodus consists of two main sections:
2. Chapters 1-15: the physical birth of the people: Liberation
3. Chapters 16-40: the spiritual birth of the people: Covenant
4. Ch. 15: genre of Song; a caesura: interruption or break; shift from narrative
5. Normative: law/ritual – another genre and fills much of Chs. 16-40;

II. Liberation preceded by

1. Prologue (1:6-22) – tone of oppression
2. Ch. 2—Moses’ education (in 3 short stories): birth (2. 1-10); attempts at intervention (2. 11-15a); activity in Midian and marriage (2. 15b-22)’
3. Chs. 3-4—God’s revelation to Moses and his commission to Pharaoh
4. Ch. 5 – Pharaoh’s increased oppression;
5. Ch. 6:2-13 – God’s reiteration of his command to Moses
6. Ch. 6: 14-27 – concludes exposition with genealogy of Levites (Priestly tribe) and roles of Aaron and Moses
7. Chs. 7-14: the Ten Plagues

III. Tenth Plague: Passover -- more extensively covered; Chs. 11-13 alternate with narrative and normative

1. Ch. 11: narrative (annunciation)
2. Ch. 12: 1-28: normative, giving the laws of Passover
3. Ch. 12:29-42: narrative (description of the catastrophe)
4. Ch. 12: 43-51 & 13: 1-16 give laws for Passover and the firstborn
5. Commentary/short reports: 11:10b, 12:28, 12:40-42, 12:50-51

IV. Preamble to 2nd Section: 5 crises involving Israel on the march

1. Water (15:22-37)
2. Food (Ch. 16)
3. Water (17:1-7)
4. War with Amalek (17: 8-16)
5. Jethro’s advice on delegation of power (Ch.18)

V. Events at Mt. Sinai – long time in narrative of Torah – only in Numbers 10:11 does Israel break camp

a. Ch. 19 – story of the theophany

b. conclusion of Ch. 24 and Ch. 20: 1-17 (Ten Commandments) embrace a

normative/legislative section including “the Book of the Covenant” (Ch. 20:22-23:19

VI. Second normative/legislative section: Chapters 25-31 – instructions for making the sanctuary (you did not have to read Chs. 25, 26, 27, 30, 31)

VII. Overall Structure:

Exposition:

1. Frame: 1;1-6
2. Israel enters into slavery, Moses’ youth: 1:7-2;22
3. Frame: 2:23-25
4. YHWH reveals himself, Moses’ call: 3-4
5. Oppression, command, genealogy: 5:1-6:27

Confrontation:

1. Prologue: 6:28-7:13
2. Nine plagues: 7:14 – 10:29
3. Tenth plague, Passover, Exodus: 11:1-13:16
4. Passage of the Reed Sea, Egypt destroyed: 13:17-14:31
5. Conclusion hymn: 15: 1-18

Introduction: making for Sinai

1. Crises in Israel over food, war, governance: 15:22-18:27

Revelation on Sinai and Covenant I:

1. Narrative text: 19:1-25
2. Normative text: Decalogue: 20: 1-17
3. Narrative text: 20:18-21
4. Normative text: Book of the Covenant: 20:22-23:19
5. Narrative text: 24:1-18
6. Instructions from God on sanctuary and worship: 25-31

Revelation on Sinai and Covenant II

1. Crisis around idolatrous people, Moses mediates: 32
2. Revelation and covenant: 33-34
3. Moses and artisans follow instructions: 35-39
4. Conclusion (speech/report) sanctuary in use: 40