

Dr. Ted Hildebrandt, Old Testament Literature, Session 12, Exodus Plagues to Tabernacle

Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Study Guide, 4) Briefing Document, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Hildebrandt, Old Testament Literature, Session 12, Exodus Plagues to Tabernacle, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This is a lecture transcript from Dr. Ted Hildebrandt's Old Testament course covering Exodus. **The lecture examines various interpretations of Exodus**, including the JEDP source critical theory, which proposes multiple authors for the Pentateuch, and Dr. Hildebrandt offers alternative perspectives. **He explores the dating of the Exodus**, considering both early and late date theories, and discusses the significance of the names Yahweh and El Shaddai. **The plagues of Egypt are analyzed in terms of their purpose and symbolism**, and the Passover is examined in its historical and theological context, with connections drawn to the Lord's Supper. Finally, **the lecture details the Tabernacle's construction, purpose, and significance**.

2. 24 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Hildebrandt, Old Testament Literature, Session 12 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Introduction → Old Testament Literature).



**Hildebrandt_OTLit_
Session 12.mp3**

3. Hildebrandt, Old Testament Literature, Session 12, Exodus Plagues to Tabernacle

Exodus: Plagues and Tabernacle Study Guide

Short Answer Quiz

1. **What is the significance of the names Yahweh and El Shaddai in the Old Testament?** El Shaddai is how God identified himself to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, emphasizing his role as the great promiser. Yahweh was the name revealed to Moses, highlighting God as the covenant keeper, the one who keeps his promises.
2. **Explain the JEDP theory of biblical authorship.** The JEDP theory suggests that the Pentateuch was written by four different sources (J, E, D, and P), each with different writing styles and theological focuses. These sources were later combined by editors, which resulted in the inconsistencies we see in the text.
3. **What was the significance of the incident involving Zipporah and Moses' son's circumcision?** This event highlights the importance of circumcision for covenant membership. Zipporah circumcised her son to avert divine wrath against Moses for neglecting this crucial practice, indicating an act of atonement and covenant renewal.
4. **What is an etiological tale, and how does it relate to the rolling stop signs in Massachusetts?** An etiological tale explains the origin of something, often a cultural practice. The tale about rolling stop signs in Massachusetts is an example, where the practice was said to originate from the need to keep cars from getting stuck in the snow during the winter.
5. **How does the idea of Passover relate to the idea of the firstborn son of the Israelites?** The Passover lamb's blood on the doorposts was meant to protect the firstborn sons of the Israelites from the plague of death. Thus, the firstborn sons were spared.
6. **What are some of the ways critics argue that the date of the Exodus was later than the early date that the Bible describes?** Critics suggest that the 480 years mentioned in Kings is a symbolic number that could be halved if generations are considered shorter (20 years instead of 40). They also relate it to a potential misunderstanding in numerical systems.

7. **Describe at least three reasons why God sent the plagues upon Egypt.** God sent the plagues to show that the Egyptian gods were powerless (that is the god's were not really gods), to show His might and power ("that they may know that I am Yahweh"), and as lex talionis (retaliation for the way Pharaoh harmed the Israelites).
8. **Explain the dual agency involved in the hardening of Pharaoh's heart.** Both God and Pharaoh are said to have hardened his heart. God did it as a judgment on Pharaoh for the evils he committed; Pharaoh did it in rebellion against God. This suggests that God's sovereignty and human free will can operate at the same time within the same event.
9. **Describe three elements of the Passover meal and their symbolic meaning.** The Passover meal includes the lamb, representing salvation; bitter herbs, representing the bitterness of slavery; and unleavened bread, representing the speed of the Exodus. These elements together symbolize the Israelites' liberation from bondage in Egypt.
10. **What three items were stored inside the Ark of the Covenant?** The Ark of the Covenant contained the Ten Commandments, Aaron's budding rod, and a pot of manna.

Short Answer Quiz - Answer Key

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Essay Questions

1. Analyze the tension between the early and late dates of the Exodus. Discuss how the biblical text can be interpreted in support of both perspectives.
2. Discuss the significance of the plagues in the context of ancient Egyptian religion and culture, and how they served to challenge the power of Pharaoh and the Egyptian gods.
3. Explain the symbolism of the Passover meal and its connection to the Lord's Supper, highlighting the continuity and transformation of these practices.
4. Describe the function and layout of the Tabernacle, and how it served as a symbolic representation of God's dwelling with his people.
5. Discuss the role of numbers, specifically the number of people that supposedly left Egypt, in the book of Exodus, and discuss different methods of interpreting these seemingly large numerical statements.

Glossary of Key Terms

- **El Shaddai:** A name for God meaning "God Almighty," emphasizing God as the great promiser to the Patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob).
- **Yahweh (YHWH):** The personal name of God revealed to Moses, translated as "LORD" in many Bibles, emphasizing God as the covenant keeper.
- **JEDP Theory:** A theory in biblical criticism positing that the Pentateuch (first five books of the Old Testament) is a composite of four distinct sources or authors (J, E, D, and P), each with its own style and perspective.
- **Etiological Tale:** A narrative that explains the origin or cause of a practice, custom, or phenomenon.
- **Lex Talionis:** The principle of "an eye for an eye," or the law of retaliation.
- **Tel:** An artificial mound made up of the stratified remains of successive human settlements.
- **Merneptah Stele:** An Egyptian stele with an inscription from Pharaoh Merneptah, which mentions a people group called "Israel."

- **Amarna Letters:** A collection of letters from the 14th century BC, written from vassal kings in Canaan to the Egyptian Pharaohs, describing the arrival of Habiru peoples.
- **Habiru:** A group of people mentioned in ancient Near East texts, sometimes associated (incorrectly) with the Hebrews.
- **Passover (Pesach):** A Jewish festival commemorating the liberation of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt.
- **Unleavened Bread:** Bread made without yeast, eaten during Passover, symbolizing the haste of the Israelite's departure from Egypt.
- **Bitter Herbs:** Herbs eaten during Passover, symbolizing the bitterness of slavery.
- **Red Sea:** The literal translation of the Hebrew phrase "yam suph," referring to the body of water that the Israelites crossed in the Exodus.
- **Sabbath:** A day of rest and worship, observed by Jews from sunset Friday to sunset Saturday, and traditionally observed by Christians on Sunday.
- **Tabernacle:** The portable sanctuary or tent used by the Israelites as a dwelling place for God.
- **Holy of Holies:** The innermost chamber of the Tabernacle and Temple, considered the most sacred space, where the Ark of the Covenant was kept.
- **Ark of the Covenant:** A sacred chest in which the tablets of the Ten Commandments were kept, as well as Aaron's rod and a pot of manna.
- **Manna:** The food miraculously provided by God for the Israelites in the wilderness; its name means, "What is it?"
- **Yom Kippur:** The Day of Atonement, the most solemn day of the Jewish year.

4. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and important ideas from the provided lecture excerpts:

Briefing Document: Dr. Ted Hildebrandt's Lecture 12 on Exodus

I. Overview

This lecture by Dr. Ted Hildebrandt focuses on key themes in the book of Exodus, particularly the significance of the names of God, the plagues, the Passover, and the Tabernacle. Dr. Hildebrandt also touches on scholarly debates around source criticism and the historicity of the Exodus narrative. He presents both traditional and critical perspectives while consistently advocating for the reliability of Scripture.

II. Key Themes and Concepts

- **Names of God (Yahweh and El Shaddai):**
- **El Shaddai:** God reveals himself to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as "El Shaddai," translated as God Almighty. Hildebrandt states: "Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob knew me as El Shaddai."
- **Yahweh:** God reveals himself to Moses as "Yahweh," often translated as LORD in English Bibles. This name is associated with God as the covenant keeper, fulfilling the promises made to the patriarchs. He says: "You Moses are going to know me as Yahweh because now I am going to show you that I am the covenant keeper."
- **Source Critical Theory (JEDP):** Dr. Hildebrandt introduces the JEDP theory, which posits that the Pentateuch is compiled from four different sources (J, E, D, and P) written at different times by different authors, rather than by Moses. This theory suggests that contradictions in the text, such as the patriarchs knowing the name Yahweh, are due to these different sources being compiled by an editor who didn't remove the inconsistencies. However, Hildebrandt strongly critiques this theory as conjecture that has no evidence, stating: "Have they ever found one document of J or one document of E, or one document of D? Have they ever found any document or hard evidence to support this? Zero. So this is all totally theoretical." He suggests the theory is based on an evolutionary model where simpler text gives way to more complex.
- **Hildebrandt's Resolution:** He suggests that the different names represent a progression in God's revelation. "Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob knew me as the

Promise Maker. You, Moses, are going to know my name Yahweh that I am the God who keeps his promises." Thus, they knew him as the God of promise while Moses would know him as the God who keeps his promises.

- **The Circumcision Incident:** The peculiar story in Exodus 4 of God attacking Moses or his son is discussed, linking it to circumcision and potentially a violation of the covenant. He discusses the euphemistic use of "feet" to mean genitals as a possible interpretation, linking the foreskin of the son to the father (Moses) as an act of symbolic substitution. He suggests that God's attack is a sign that Moses must follow the laws of the covenant.
- **The Plagues of Egypt:**
 - **Purpose:** The plagues serve to demonstrate God's power and character to both the Egyptians and the Israelites and to fulfill the promise to Abraham.
 - **"That they may know that I am Yahweh."** He points out that the plagues serve as a way for God to reveal himself.
 - **Lex Talionis:** Dr. Hildebrandt notes a principle of lex talionis (law of retaliation) in the plagues, where God judges Egypt with similar actions to how the Egyptians treated the Israelites. "Because you were seeking to destroy my firstborn, I'm going to take your firstborn."
 - **Key Plagues:** He emphasizes the significance of four plagues: the snake (representing the defeat of Egyptian power), the blood in the Nile (challenging the worship of the Nile), the darkness (defying the Egyptian sun god Ra), and the death of the firstborn (a direct judgment related to the earlier decree to kill Israelite infants).
 - **God's Actions and Pharaoh's Heart:** Hildebrandt addresses the issue of God hardening Pharaoh's heart, showing how the Bible says God hardens Pharaoh's heart, but also that Pharaoh hardens his own heart. He suggests: "It is possible that you can have two agencies working on the same event? From God's perspective, God hardens Pharaoh's heart in judgment on Pharaoh because of the evils that he's done... Is it possible that Pharaoh hardens his heart in rebellion against God? So what you have is the same event happening for two different reasons with God meaning one thing by it and pharaoh meaning another thing by it."

- **The Passover:**
- **Components:** The Passover involves three main elements: the sacrificial lamb (whose blood protects from the angel of death), bitter herbs (representing the bitterness of slavery), and unleavened bread (representing the hasty departure from Egypt).
- **Symbolism:** Hildebrandt states, "When the angel of death looks down and sees the blood, what does the angel do? Passes over. That's where the name Passover comes from." He connects the Passover with the Lord's Supper, noting that the Passover lamb finds its fulfillment in Jesus as the ultimate sacrifice. "The Lord's Supper is actually the Passover feast with the lamb, only this time, who is going to be the lamb? Jesus is going to be the Passover lamb."
- **Children's Role:** The lecture emphasizes the active role of children in the Passover meal, encouraging questions and engagement rather than exclusion.
- **The Exodus and Numbers:**
- **Large Numbers:** The biblical account of 600,000 men plus women and children leaving Egypt (potentially 2.4 million people) poses logistical challenges, which are discussed in detail. These include food, water, and the difficulty of traveling with such a large group. Hildebrandt notes: "2.4 million people, is that a lot of people? Have any of you guys ever been down to Boston for the 4th of July? If you ever get a chance to do that it's incredible...There are 600,000 people in Boston...2.4 million people now you're walking them through the desert, is this going to be a problem?"
- **Potential Solutions:** Hildebrandt explores the possibility of interpreting the Hebrew word "eleph" (translated as "thousand") as "clans" or "families" rather than a literal number. He admits that no solution is completely satisfactory and states, "This is one of the problems with Scripture, to be honest with you, I don't know the solution to this...I wish I did, I've read a lot of scholars and I don't think anyone knows, really." He also suggests that the ancient numbering system may be different from the modern system.
- **Dating the Exodus:**
- **Early vs. Late Date:** Hildebrandt discusses the debate between an early (1445 BC) and late (1200s BC) date for the Exodus. The early date is supported by 1 Kings 6:1, which states 480 years prior to Solomon's 4th year, and Judges 11:26 where Jephthah says that his family owned the land for 300 years. The Merneptah Stele

(around 1200 BC) is also mentioned, which does not mention Israel, but some take that as evidence for the late date. However, he also discusses the Amarna Letters which seem to refer to the Habiru who could be the Hebrews around 1400BC as supporting an earlier date, although he also cautions against making that direct connection.

- **Generations** Hildebrandt points out that a 40-year generation may have been a standard measure, but that realistically a generation was more like 20 years. This is one way that critics attempt to shrink the 480 years to 240 years.
- **The Crossing of the Reed Sea:**
 - **Location:** Hildebrandt identifies the term "Yam Suph" as "Reed Sea" not Red Sea. He presents three views on the crossing: The Bitter Lakes, the Red Sea (Gulf of Suez arm) and a more radical theory that the crossing happened much further south in Arabia. He acknowledges these varying perspectives.
- **God as Warrior:**
 - **Biblical Portrayal:** The lecture highlights the biblical portrayal of God as a warrior, quoting Exodus 15:3, "The Lord is a warrior; Yahweh is his name." He suggests this is an important aspect of God's character, even though it may conflict with modern sensibilities. "Is God a warrior? Is that one of God's titles that he is a warrior?" He notes that war is ugly but sometimes necessary.
- **The Sabbath:**
 - **Importance:** He suggests that the Sabbath is a rhythm that people need to incorporate into their lives. Hildebrandt compares the importance of the Sabbath to the foundation of a road, saying it's a good base to set one's life on. "What I'm going to suggest to you is that the Sabbath principle is a good base to set your life on."
 - **Remembering:** He also states that remembering the past is necessary to making sense of life and that the Sabbath helps people to do this.
- **The Tabernacle:**
 - **Dwelling Place of God:** He notes that the tabernacle is the place that God would dwell among the Israelites, with the tabernacle being a tent to match the tented living situation of the Israelites. "Then have them make me a sanctuary for me and I will dwell among them."

- **Symbolism:** The Tabernacle symbolizes heaven on earth as well as a return to the Garden of Eden.
- **Layout and Function:** The lecture walks through the layout of the tabernacle, including the courtyard, the holy place, and the Holy of Holies, and the placement of various elements like the lampstand, the table of shewbread, the incense altar, and the ark of the covenant. It notes how the fragrance in the tabernacle triggers a sense of presence.
- **The Ark:** He explains the contents of the ark: the Ten Commandments, Aaron's rod that budded, and a pot of manna.

III. Conclusion

Dr. Hildebrandt's lecture provides a comprehensive overview of key themes in Exodus, engaging with both traditional interpretations and scholarly debates. He emphasizes the importance of wrestling with difficult passages and seeking to understand them within their historical and theological context. His willingness to acknowledge unanswered questions while maintaining confidence in the authority of Scripture is a notable aspect of the lecture.

5. FAQs on Hildebrandt, Old Testament Literature, Session 12, Exodus Plagues to Tabernacle, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ

1. **What is the JEDP theory, and what does it suggest about the authorship of the Pentateuch?**
2. The JEDP theory is a source-critical theory that proposes that the first five books of the Bible (the Pentateuch) were not written by Moses, but rather compiled from four separate sources written centuries later. These sources are referred to as "J" (who favors the name Jehovah/Yahweh), "E" (who favors the name Elohim), "D" (the Deuteronomist, who wrote Deuteronomy), and "P" (the Priestly source). According to this theory, these sources were later combined and edited to form the Pentateuch we have today, explaining contradictions within the text. Notably, there is no physical evidence of any of these documents ever existing and the theory is based on conjecture and not facts.
3. **How does the text address the apparent contradiction between Exodus 6:3 and Genesis regarding the name Yahweh?**
4. Exodus 6:3 states that God did not make himself known to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob by the name Yahweh, while Genesis suggests that Jacob did use the name Yahweh. The text proposes that this is not a contradiction but rather a progressive revelation of God's character. The patriarchs knew God as El Shaddai (the Great Promiser), while Moses would know him as Yahweh (the Covenant Keeper), as God would demonstrate his faithfulness by fulfilling his promises. This resolves the issue by understanding the different aspects of God's character being revealed at different times. The meaning of the name Yahweh implies God's covenant keeping.

5. **What is the significance of the circumcision incident involving Moses' son in Exodus 4:24-26, and what is the interpretation of the word "feet" in that passage?**
6. In Exodus 4:24-26, God appears to attack either Moses or his son because the son was not circumcised. Zipporah, Moses's wife, circumcises their son and touches Moses' "feet" with the foreskin. The incident suggests that circumcision was a necessary requirement to participate in the Passover later. The word "feet" can also be a euphemism for male genitalia in a few passages in the Bible and in this context, is likely used to symbolize the transfer of the son's circumcision to the father, Moses. This incident is also seen as a premonition of the importance of circumcision to participate in Passover.
7. **What are the primary reasons for the plagues in Egypt, according to the lecture?**
8. The plagues in Egypt serve three main purposes. First, they were meant to demonstrate that Yahweh was more powerful than the gods of Egypt and to judge those gods (including the Pharaoh, who was considered a god himself). Second, they were to reveal God's character to both the Egyptians and the Israelites so that they may know that he is Yahweh. Lastly, the plagues exhibit a nature of "lex talionis" or the law of retaliation. Because Pharaoh sought to destroy the firstborn of God's people, God took the firstborn of Egypt as a form of judgment.
9. **How do the roles of God and Pharaoh interact in the hardening of Pharaoh's heart?** The text explains that both God and Pharaoh hardened Pharaoh's heart. From God's perspective, He hardened Pharaoh's heart as a judgment for Pharaoh's wickedness. Simultaneously, Pharaoh hardened his own heart in rebellion against God. The text notes that God and man can both be actors in the same event with different intentions. Therefore, it is not a contradiction that both parties were involved in the hardening of Pharaoh's heart.
10. **What are the three key elements of the Passover, and what do they symbolize?**
11. The three key elements of the Passover are the lamb, bitter herbs, and unleavened bread. The lamb represents the sacrificial animal whose blood was placed on the doorposts to protect the firstborn from the angel of death. The bitter herbs symbolize the bitterness of slavery and the hardships suffered by the Israelites in Egypt. The unleavened bread is a reminder of the haste with which the Israelites left Egypt, as there was no time for the bread to rise. The Passover meal looks forward to the coming of Christ and is seen as a forerunner to the Lord's Supper.

12. What are some of the logistical challenges associated with the biblical account of the Exodus, particularly the large number of Israelites leaving Egypt?

13. The text highlights several logistical challenges associated with the biblical account of 2.4 million Israelites leaving Egypt. These include the enormous amount of water and food required for such a large group in the desert, the difficulties of navigating the terrain, especially with young children and the elderly, the vast numbers of births and how they would be managed with only two midwives, and the issues with the overall size of the Israelite encampment in the Sinai. These practical issues of a large migration are examined in the lecture. The lecturer also admits that, although there are many hypotheses about the number of people involved in the Exodus, the correct solution is not known.

14. What is the significance of the Tabernacle, and what are some of its key components and meanings?

15. The Tabernacle was a portable sanctuary where God's presence would dwell among the Israelites, reflecting the name Immanuel ("God with us"). It symbolizes a piece of heaven on earth, due to the presence of the cherubim, and the return to the Garden of Eden, where God dwells among his people. It contained the ark of the covenant, which housed the Ten Commandments, Aaron's budding rod, and a pot of manna. The Tabernacle also consisted of the courtyard with the altar of burnt offerings, the holy place with the lampstand, table of shewbread, incense altar, and the Holy of Holies which contained the ark. The placement of the Tabernacle in the center of the tribes symbolized God's centrality in their lives.