

Dr. John Oswalt, Exodus, Session 2, Exodus 3-4

Resources from NotebookLM

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

1. Abstract of Oswalt, Exodus, Session 2, Exodus 3-4, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This is a transcript of a lecture by Dr. John Oswalt on Exodus chapters 3-4. **The lecture focuses on God's call of Moses**, exploring Moses's objections and God's responses. **Oswalt emphasizes God's holiness and the significance of the divine name, Yahweh.** He interprets the burning bush as a symbol of God's transformative power and discusses the importance of covenant obedience, illustrated by the near-death experience of Moses and his uncircumcised son. **Finally, the lecture highlights God's active involvement in delivering his people and his willingness to accommodate human limitations.**

2. 19 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Oswalt, Exodus, Session 2 – 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 →
Pentateuch → Exodus).



Oswalt_Exodus_Ses
sion02.mp3

3. Briefing Document: Oswalt, Exodus, Session 2, Exodus 3-4

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and important ideas from the provided excerpts of Dr. John Oswalt's teaching on Exodus 3-4:

Briefing Document: Dr. John Oswalt on Exodus 3-4

Date: October 26, 2024 **Subject:** Analysis of Dr. John Oswalt's Teaching on Exodus 3-4

Source: Excerpts from "Oswalt_Exodus_EN_Session02.pdf" **Prepared For:** Internal Use

1. Introduction:

This document summarizes the key points from Dr. John Oswalt's lecture on Exodus chapters 3 and 4, focusing on the calling of Moses and the revelation of God's character. Oswalt frames Exodus as a book of revelation, focusing on Yahweh's power (chs 1-15), providence (15:22-18:27), and principles/presence (Sinai and the Tabernacle). This session delves into the critical moment of Moses' call at the burning bush.

2. Key Themes:

- **The Call of the Deliverer (Exodus 3-4):** The core focus of this session is God's call to Moses to deliver the Israelites from Egypt. This involves a dramatic theophany, a commissioning, and a series of objections from Moses.
- **Revelation of God's Holiness:** The encounter at the burning bush highlights God's holiness as a central aspect of his character. This holiness is not just a cosmic otherness but also involves a moral character that demands a transformed life.
- **God's Persistence and Involvement:** God's persistent pursuit of Moses despite his reluctance showcases God's determination to fulfill His promises and His deep involvement in human affairs. He is not just powerful, but also relational and compassionate.
- **The Significance of God's Name (YHWH):** The revelation of God's name, "I AM," establishes God's self-existence, eternal nature, and transcendent being. It's not a label but a statement of His very essence and character, not a declaration of sovereignty, but of His being.
- **The Nature of Faith and Obedience:** Oswalt emphasizes that true faith results in obedience. While recognizing Moses' initial struggles, the ultimate question is whether he will obey God's will. The circumcision of his son highlights the need for full commitment, symbolized by ritual behavior that witnesses to a change of heart.

- **God's Purpose in Deliverance:** The ultimate purpose of God's deliverance isn't just freedom from bondage but coming home to him and having him take up residence in the midst of his people.

3. Main Ideas and Facts:

- **The Burning Bush:** The burning bush that is not consumed is a powerful symbol. It communicates that while God is a consuming fire, he will not destroy those who allow him into their lives. As Oswalt states, "If God sets us aflame, he will not burn us up."
- The sight is not a normal occurrence, drawing Moses' attention because the bush was not being consumed. As Oswalt notes, "it's, in particular, the fact that it was not being consumed that drew him to it."
- **God's Call and Moses' Initial Reaction:** God calls Moses by name, emphasizing a personal and intimate connection: "Moses, Moses" and Moses responds, "Here I am," a parallel to Abraham's response in Genesis 22, highlighting that God knows us by name.
- God's presence makes the ground holy: "Take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you're standing is holy ground." This shows that holiness is not inherent to a place but comes from God's presence.
- The concept of holiness is introduced here as a necessary prerequisite for Moses' leadership, and God's holiness is revealed. As Oswalt states, "right at the outset now Moses, you need to understand something about me."
- **God's Holiness:** Holiness in God's essence is radically otherness, or transcendence. Oswalt explains, "He is absolutely other than his creation". This is contrasted with pagan concepts where gods are part of the created world and thus manipulated.
- Holiness also involves character. This second aspect of holiness is the one that the covenant is about. "When God says you must be holy as I am holy, he's not talking about this [transcendence]. But we can share his character."
- **The Significance of God's Name (YHWH):** God's name, revealed as "I AM", signifies self-existence and eternal nature. As Oswalt says, "He is the I am. The same yesterday, today, and forever...He's the one who is in himself." This name implies a being from whom all other existence flows, distinguishing God from all creation.

- The name is not just a label but reflects his character. The name is a verbal element. "This is his character. This is his nature. This is his reputation. And so, in that sense, it is his name."
- Oswalt explains how the name YHWH became represented by small caps in modern translations. He explains that the Jews substituted "Adonai" for YHWH out of reverence, and later, the vowels from Adonai were placed into YHWH, resulting in "Jehovah", however, this was a mistake.
- **Moses' Objections and God's Responses:****First Objection:** Moses asks, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh?" God replies, "I will be with you," emphasizing God's presence, not Moses' ability. Oswalt highlights, "The issue isn't your ability. The issue is my presence."
- **Second Objection:** Moses asks, "What is your name?" God responds with "I AM," revealing his self-existence.
- **Third Objection:** Moses fears disbelief. God provides signs (staff to snake, leprosy), demonstrating his power. The staff represents personal identity, which when not held by God's power becomes a snake and eats them alive. "If my job is my identity, it's a snake. It's going to eat me alive."
- **Fourth Objection:** Moses expresses his lack of eloquence. God promises to be with his mouth, but Moses still resists. Oswalt humorously notes God's exasperation. "Who made man's mouth? ... Is it not I, Yahweh, the I am? Now, therefore, go, and I will be with your mouth." God accommodates his own plan by providing Aaron as a speaker.
- **Moses' Obedience and the Circumcision Incident:** Moses' final obedience is not framed as an emotional surrender but a decision to act, highlighting that obedience is the true test of faith. "The question is, when you do get there, are you going to do what he says? That's all that matters."
- The strange incident where God seeks to kill Moses at the lodging place is interpreted as a consequence of Moses not circumcising his son. It was a sign of covenant obedience. This act highlighted the partial commitment Moses was demonstrating. As Oswalt notes, "God is saying that your commitment is actually only partial...And if you aren't, then what you're going to do here will be dangerous."

- The fact that Zipporah performs the circumcision instantly shows that they both knew its significance, even though their behavior showed that they didn't see it as necessary.

4. Key Quotes:

- "If God sets us aflame, he will not burn us up."
- "The issue isn't your ability. The issue is my presence."
- "He is the I am. The same yesterday, today, and forever."
- "This is his character. This is his nature. This is his reputation. And so, in that sense, it is his name."
- "When God says you must be holy as I am holy, he's not talking about this [transcendence]. But we can share his character."
- "The question is, when you do get there, are you going to do what he says? That's all that matters."
- "God is saying that your commitment is actually only partial...And if you aren't, then what you're going to do here will be dangerous."

5. Implications:

- **Understanding God's Character:** This passage is crucial for understanding the nature of God as holy, transcendent, and yet intimately involved with humanity.
- **The Importance of Obedience:** The narrative shows that true faith requires obedience, even when it's difficult or we doubt ourselves.
- **Holistic Faith:** The call to holiness and the circumcision incident reveal that faith and obedience must be holistic and not just based on ritual.
- **God's Unwavering Commitment:** The story highlights God's persistence in pursuing his purpose, even when his chosen people (and leaders) are reluctant.

6. Conclusion:

Dr. Oswalt's analysis of Exodus 3-4 provides a rich understanding of God's character and purpose. It emphasizes God's holiness, power, and relational nature. The call of Moses showcases the interplay between human weakness and God's unwavering commitment. The need for full covenant obedience, evidenced by the circumcision incident, underscores the importance of aligning our actions with our faith.

This briefing should serve as a comprehensive summary of the main themes and ideas presented in the lecture excerpts.

4. Study Guide: Oswalt, Exodus, Session 2, Exodus 3-4

Exodus 3-4 Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. Why is the burning bush significant, beyond just being a miraculous event?
2. What does God mean when he tells Moses to take off his sandals because he is on holy ground?
3. Why does the name "I AM" (YHWH) reveal about God's nature?
4. What are the implications of God saying he "has seen, heard, and knows" the Israelites' suffering?
5. Why does God choose to use Moses to deliver the Israelites instead of doing it all himself?
6. What is the significance of God saying "I will be with you" in response to Moses' first objection?
7. What are the dual aspects of holiness as described in this section of Exodus?
8. What is the meaning of Moses turning his staff into a snake and then back into a staff?
9. Why does God seek to put Moses to death at the lodging place?
10. What is the significance of the circumcision in the story of Moses and his son?

Quiz Answer Key

1. The burning bush symbolizes that God's presence will not consume or destroy those who allow Him into their lives, contrary to the devil's message. It contrasts with the idea of God as a destructive consuming fire, portraying instead a purifying and non-destructive power.
2. It indicates that God's presence makes the place holy, not the location itself. It emphasizes that holiness is a quality of God that transforms what he touches, even common dirt.

3. It indicates that God is self-existent, beyond time, and the source of all being. The name implies God is not subject to human manipulation and is the one who is and always will be.
4. These verbs demonstrate God's active involvement and care for his people, not a distant god. They show that he is omniscient, omnipotent, and compassionate, engaging with their plight.
5. He desires to involve people in his saving work to build relationships. This shows that God is interested in both the work being done and the personal growth of the people he involves.
6. God's answer focuses on his presence as the true source of Moses's ability, not his own. It reassures Moses that God's power is sufficient and will accomplish his work.
7. Holiness as essence is God's radical otherness and transcendence, wholly separate from creation. Holiness as character is God's moral nature that his followers are called to emulate.
8. It signifies that God has power over evil and can transform it, demonstrating his authority. It suggests that even human identities can be shaped and redeemed by God.
9. God sought to put Moses to death because Moses had not circumcised his son, neglecting a vital sign of covenant obedience. It shows that God requires whole-hearted commitment, not half-hearted compliance.
10. It is the physical sign of the covenant, a mark of surrender to God. By circumcising his son, Moses is showing that he's committed to the covenant and therefore suitable to lead God's people.

Essay Questions

Instructions: Answer each question with a well-developed essay.

1. Analyze the various ways Dr. Oswalt argues that the encounter at the burning bush serves as the foundation for God's relationship with Moses and Israel.
2. How does the concept of God's holiness, as presented in Exodus 3-4, differ from common pagan understandings of divinity?

3. Discuss the significance of Moses' objections and God's responses in Exodus 3-4, paying special attention to what this reveals about the nature of God's call to serve.
4. Explore the relationship between ritual and the heart, particularly in the context of the circumcision incident at the lodging place and how that speaks to a human's relationship with God.
5. Explain how the name "Yahweh" (YHWH), as it is revealed in Exodus 3, embodies the character and essence of God in the larger context of the entire book.

Glossary

- **Adonai:** A Hebrew word meaning "Lord," often used as a substitute for the divine name YHWH (Yahweh) due to its holiness.
- **Covenant:** A binding agreement or pact, often between God and his people, involving promises and obligations.
- **Holiness:** The state of being set apart or consecrated to God, both in essence and in moral character.
- **Horeb:** Another name for Mount Sinai, the mountain where Moses encountered God in the burning bush.
- **I AM:** The divine name revealed to Moses, indicating God's self-existence, eternity, and unchangeable nature.
- **Omnipotent:** All-powerful, possessing unlimited authority and power.
- **Providence:** God's guidance and care for his creation, particularly in fulfilling needs and promises.
- **Sinai:** The mountain where God appeared to Moses and where he would later give the law.
- **Transcendent:** Existing outside of or not subject to the physical universe; completely other than creation.
- **Yahweh (YHWH):** The personal name of God in the Hebrew Bible, often translated as "Lord" in English versions.

5. FAQs on Oswalt, Exodus, Session 2, Exodus 3-4, Biblealearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions about Exodus 3-4

1. **Why is the burning bush described as a significant event in Moses' encounter with God?**
2. The burning bush is a powerful symbol. It is burning but not consumed, illustrating that God's presence and power are like a fire that purifies and transforms without destroying those who believe in Him. This contrasts with the devil's message that God is a consuming fire that will ultimately make someone miserable, the bush demonstrates that God will not burn up His children. Additionally, the unusual sight of a bush that is burning without being consumed captures Moses' attention and draws him closer, creating a space for their encounter.
3. **What does it mean that God called Moses by name ("Moses, Moses")?**
4. God knowing Moses' name signifies that God knows us personally and intimately. It's not a generic call, but a specific one tailored to Moses and to his destiny. This personal calling emphasizes that God has a specific purpose for each person and that his relationship with us is individualized. This personal knowing is a major theme in the Bible.
5. **Why did God tell Moses to take off his sandals when approaching the burning bush, and what does it signify?**
6. The command to take off sandals signifies that the ground Moses was standing on had become holy because of God's presence. There was nothing intrinsically holy about the dirt; it was made holy by the presence of the Holy One. This emphasizes that holiness isn't inherent in places but is a quality that God imparts. It also communicates that the common and the holy cannot be mixed. This also means that everything God touches becomes holy.

7. **What does the concept of "holiness" mean in the context of God?**
8. Holiness in reference to God has two primary meanings. First, it refers to God's essence, that he is "radically other" or transcendent from his creation. He is unlike any other being in the universe. Second, it refers to God's character. His character is the standard for morality. Unlike pagan gods, who could be both "good" and "bad" but still called holy, God's holiness implies moral perfection. As beings made in God's image, we can't become God, but we can share in his moral character through our relationship with him.
9. **Why does Moses hide his face after God identifies Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob?**
10. This particular revelation makes Moses hide his face because it shifts Moses' understanding of God from a distant, transcendent being to a God intimately involved with his ancestors. It is a realization that the family God whom the Israelites were taking for granted was also the holy, powerful God of the burning bush. This revelation causes Moses to feel reverence and fear and illustrates that while God is loving and caring he is also awesome and powerful.
11. **What is the significance of God's self-declaration, "I AM," when Moses asks for God's name?**
12. When God answers Moses with "I AM", he is declaring that he is self-existent, the one who is before all things. This name is beyond all past, present, and future tenses. God has no beginning and no end. It is not just a name; it's a declaration of God's uncreated, eternal being from which all existence flows. God's declaration that he is "I AM" also communicates that God is not manipulatable, contrasting with pagan gods who were considered part of the cosmos and could be influenced by people.

13. What are Moses' four main objections to God's call, and how does God address them?

14. Moses presents four objections: (1) He questions his own capability. (2) He asks about God's name. (3) He worries that the people won't believe him. (4) He claims he is not a good speaker. God's answers are that (1) it is about God's presence, not Moses' ability; (2) he reveals his name as "I AM", showing his eternal nature; (3) he gives Moses miraculous signs to validate his authority; and (4) God assures Moses of His help in speaking and provides Aaron as a spokesperson. These responses highlight that God is more interested in obedience than ability.

15. What was the significance of Zipporah's circumcision of their son, and why did it happen in this strange way?

Zipporah's act of circumcising their son was a response to God seeking to kill Moses. It highlights that the sign of the covenant, circumcision, was not being honored by Moses. The fact that Zipporah does the circumcision implies that they had talked about it before and indicates an underlying problem. The incident emphasizes that rituals without the right heart attitude are empty, and that full commitment to God is necessary. It also shows God's absolute requirement that Moses follow through on his promises even if that means Zipporah is forced to take action in an emergency.