Moses

Joseph "novella" sets up the Egyptian context of the main event: Exodus

The centrality of Moses to the Biblical Tradition:
(1) Law Giver
(2) Liberator
(3) Founder of Traditions like Prophecy?
(4) Founder of Priesthood (through brother Aaron)

The power of the story comes from the combination of the LAWS, with the STORY OF EXODUS. The two basic stories…but are they really separate?

Lind: You can't have your EXODUS without SINAI! Liberation needs DISCIPLINE

Gottwald:
Basic plot of the Moses Story is simple, with many aspects "grafted in":

(A) The Release from Egypt (Exodus narrative itself)
(B) The Stay near Sinai/Horeb
(C) Giving of the Law
(D) The Approach to Transjordan

Let's begin with Moses himself.

Name: MOSIS = like name of Pharaohs such as THUT[MOSIS] = "son", "progeny"

OR,

word-play on Mshitho (Ex 2:10) = "because I drew him from the water..." from MASHAH to MOSHE
WIKIPEDIA:

According to Exodus 12:37–38, the Israelites numbered "about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides women and children," plus many non-Israelites and livestock. Numbers 1:46 gives a more precise total of 603,550 men aged 20 and up. It is difficult to reconcile the idea of 600,000 Israelite fighting men with the information that the Israelites were afraid of the Philistines and Egyptians. The 600,000, plus wives, children, the elderly, and the "mixed multitude" of non-Israelites would have numbered some 2 million people. Marching ten abreast, and without accounting for livestock, they would have formed a line 150 miles long. The entire Egyptian population in 1250 BCE is estimated to have been around 3 to 3.5 million, and no evidence has been found that Egypt ever suffered the demographic and economic catastrophe such a loss of population would represent, nor that the Sinai desert ever hosted (or could have hosted) these millions of people and their herds.
The Influence of the Sargon Legend (2300 BCE):

1. Sargon, the mighty king, king of Akkadê am I,
2. My mother was lowly; my father I did not know;
3. The brother of my father dwelt in the mountain.
4. My city is Azupiranu, which is situated on the bank of the Purattu [Euphrates],
5. My lowly mother conceived me, in secret she brought me forth.
6. She placed me in a basket of reeds, she closed my entrance with bitumen,
7. She cast me upon the rivers which did not overflow me.
8. The river carried me, it brought me to Akki, the irrigator.
9. Akki, the irrigator, in the goodness of his heart lifted me out,
10. Akki, the irrigator, as his own son brought me up;
11. Akki, the irrigator, as his gardener appointed me.
12. When I was a gardener the goddess Ishtar loved me,
13. And for four years I ruled the kingdom.
14. The black-headed peoples I ruled, I governed...

But most scholars accept the basic Egyptian setting of the Moses story:

(1) Name of Moses
(2) Asian slaves in Egypt
(3) Omission of Pharaoh’s name is even suggestive of Egyptian tradition
(4) Work at Pi-Ramesses after 1500 BCE
(5) Merneptah Stele – earliest mention of “Israel”
(6) Terms: bulrushes, pitch, reeds, Water’s edge for Nile River, etc.
The basic outline of Moses biography:

(1) Born in Israelite slavery

- Birth of heroic figure – expansions are typical, Bible, Herodotus and Cyrus, etc.

(2) Unsuccessful efforts to free slaves

- Murder of the taskmaster:
  - Exodus 2:11-15  
  11 One day, after Moses had grown up, he went out to his people and saw their forced labor. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his kinsfolk.  
  12 He looked this way and that, and seeing no one he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.  
  13 When he went out the next day, he saw two Hebrews fighting; and he said to the one who was in the wrong, "Why do you strike your fellow Hebrew?"  
  14 He answered, "Who made you a ruler and judge over us? Do you mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?" Then Moses was afraid and thought, "Surely the thing is known."  
  15 When Pharaoh heard of it, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from Pharaoh. He settled in the land of Midian, and sat down by a well.

(3) Midianite sojourn (in the desert)

- Leads to calling at the Burning Bush.

(4) Return to lead people
The Exodus Events themselves:

(1) Blood: **Exodus 7:15** 15 Go to Pharaoh in the morning, as he is going out to the water; stand by at the river bank to meet him, and take in your hand the staff that was turned into a snake.

(2) Frogs: **Exodus 8:1** Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh and say to him, 'Thus says the LORD: Let my people go, so that they may worship me."

(3) Lice/gnats: **Exodus 8:16** 16 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Stretch out your staff and strike the dust of the earth, so that it may become gnats throughout the whole land of Egypt.'"

(4) Insects: **Exodus 8:20** 20 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Rise early in the morning and present yourself before Pharaoh, as he goes out to the water, and say to him, 'Thus says the LORD: Let my people go, so that they may worship me."

(5) Pestilence: **Exodus 9:1** Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh, and say to him, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews: Let my people go, so that they may worship me."

(6) Boils: **Exodus 9:8** 8 Then the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Take handfuls of soot from the kiln, and let Moses throw it in the air in the sight of Pharaoh."

(7) Hail **Exodus 9:13** 13 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Rise up early in the morning and present yourself before Pharaoh, and say to him, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews: Let my people go, so that they may worship me."

(8) Locust: **Exodus 10:1** NRS **Exodus 10:1** Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh; for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his officials, in order that I may show these signs of mine among them,

(9) Darkness: **Exodus 10:21** 21 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward heaven so that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, a darkness that can be felt."
Then the strange ending and beginning of the new event:

**Exodus 10:28 - 11:1** 28 Then Pharaoh said to him, "Get away from me! Take care that you do not see my face again, for on the day you see my face you shall die." 29 Moses said, "Just as you say! I will never see your face again."  

**NRS**  

**Exodus 11:1** The LORD said to Moses, "I will bring one more plague upon Pharaoh and upon Egypt; afterwards he will let you go from here; indeed, when he lets you go, he will drive you away.

Ch. 11 seems to start a NEW tradition – the Death of the Firstborn.  
This combines with the EARLY story of the death of the firstborn HEBREWS.

Some variation in the tradition:

**Psalm 78:43-52** 43 when he displayed his signs in Egypt, and his miracles in the fields of Zoan. 44 He turned their rivers to blood, so that they could not drink of their streams. 45 He sent among them swarms of flies, which devoured them, and frogs, which destroyed them. 46 He gave their crops to the caterpillar, and the fruit of their labor to the locust. 47 He destroyed their vines with hail, and their sycamores with frost. 48 He gave over their cattle to the hail, and their flocks to thunderbolts. 49 He let loose on them his fierce anger, wrath, indignation, and distress, a company of destroying angels. 50 He made a path for his anger; he did not spare them from death, but gave their lives over to the plague. 51 He struck all the firstborn in Egypt, the first issue of their strength in the tents of Ham. 52 Then he led out his people like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock.

**Psalm 105:26-38** 26 He sent his servant Moses, and Aaron whom he had chosen. 27 They performed his signs among them, and miracles in the land of Ham. 28 He sent darkness, and made the land dark; they rebelled against his words. 29 He turned their waters into blood, and caused their fish to die. 30 Their land swarmed with frogs, even in the chambers of their kings. 31 He spoke, and there came swarms of flies, and gnats throughout their country. 32 He gave them hail for rain, and lightning that flashed through their land. 33 He struck their vines and fig trees, and shattered the trees of their country. 34 He spoke, and the locusts came, and young locusts without number; 35 they devoured all the vegetation in their land, and ate up the fruit of their ground. 36 He struck down all the firstborn in their land, the first issue of all their strength. 37 Then he brought Israel out with silver and gold, and there was no one among their tribes who stumbled. 38 Egypt was glad when they departed, for dread of them had fallen upon it.
The “naturalistic” explanation does not work.

The Hebrews were fooled into thinking natural events were miraculous?

Neither does the “gods of Egypt” work completely:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plague</th>
<th>Egyptian Deity targeted</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Nile to blood</td>
<td>Khnum--creator of water and life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hapi--Nile god</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Osiris--the Nile was his bloodstream</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Frogs</td>
<td>Heket--goddess of childbirth whose symbol was the frog</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Gnats</td>
<td>??</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Flies</td>
<td>??</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Cattle disease</td>
<td>Hathor--mother and sky goddess whose symbol was the cow</td>
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<td>Apis--bull god</td>
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<td>6. Boils</td>
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<td>7. Hail</td>
<td>Seth--god of wind and storm</td>
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<td>8. Locusts</td>
<td>Isis-goddess of life</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Min--goddess of fertility and vegetation, protector of crops</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Darkness</td>
<td>Amon-Re, Atum, Horus--sun deities</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Death of firstborn</td>
<td>Osiris--judge of the dead and patron deity of the pharaoh</td>
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</tbody>
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More likely – God against PHARAOH.

Religious development:

(1) Egyptian culture (akhenaton’s monotheism)
(2) From Israelites in captivity (but that is too basic for Moses’ religious views)
(3) Midianites? Tent worship?
(4) Religious experience?

THREE ELEMENTS: Yahweh, Tent worship, Covenant/Law

Further elements of editing on the Exodus Story – the SOURCES on the CROSSING OF THE REED SEA (Handout).

The people of Israel have their origins in slavery, liberated by God. A People literally created by God from slaves. A story widely treasured by peoples around the world.

Liberation Theology = Exodus Story at the heart of Theology.
THE OTHER TEN:

(1) Lev. 25 – Sabbatical Redistribution of Land
(2) Deut 22:8 – Building and Safety
(3) Deut 23: 24-25 – Starvation is NOT tolerated
(4) Deut 20 – The poor do not fight the rich man’s war!
(5) Deut 24:14 – do NOT withhold the wages of the poor
(6) Deut 24:17 – do NOT treat aliens differently!
(7) Deut 24:19 – Gleaning rights
(9) Deut 25:5-10 – Women’s Rights!
(10) Dept. 23:15-16 – Slave’s right to asylum

But there are PROBLEMS:

Women are NOT treated equally:

Deut. 21: 10-14 – Women taken after war

Deut 22: 13-21 – Treatment of married women

Deut 22: 25-27 – Laws about rape

Women are property!

MIXING:

Deut 22: 9-11