Diverse groups envisioned themselves as modern Israelites; these include black South Africans struggling against apartheid, Zimbabweans striving to free themselves from British colonial rule, and African Americans seeking freedom and equality. Liberation theologians have found the exodus particularly helpful in developing a theology for resisting and overcoming social and economic oppression, especially in Latin America and Africa (e.g., George V. Pixley's, *On Exodus*). The exodus has provided hope for deliverance, inspiration to act, and a way to bring legitimacy to particular causes.

The African-American experience illustrates the social impact of the exodus theme. African-American slaves found many parallels between their struggle against slavery and that of the biblical Israelites. White abolitionists likewise took up the exodus theme to press for slavery's overthrow. Once slavery ended, however, African-Americans re-focused the exodus to challenge new forms of oppression. In 1879–80, Benjamin "Pap" Singleton, known as the "Moses of the Colored Exodus," led thousands of African Americans, nicknamed "Exodusters," to leave the South where they continued to suffer extreme discrimination and re-establish themselves in Kansas. The exodus also enlivened the civil rights movement during the 20th century, being perhaps most prominently used by Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X. Both likened segregationists to the Egyptian pharaoh, and King described the 1954 Supreme Court desegregation of public schools (*Brown v. Board of Education*) as a parting of the Red Sea. The passing of the movement, however, did not end the theme's usefulness. Barack Obama invoked it not only to stimulate action, but also to bestow honor on those who had participated in the struggle. In a speech given in 2007 commemorating the Selma voting rights march of 1965 (and also in a 2010 presidential statement), Obama called these individuals the "Moses generation." Given the status of the exodus in Christianity, as well as its longtime use in the African-American community, this was indeed high praise (as well as politically astute rhetoric). Obama also challenged his generation, which he called the "Joshua generation," to complete the task.

Political upheavals have been particularly open to exodus influence, with competing groups readily identifying themselves and others as contemporary Israelites and Egyptians. Europeans – especially the British – and Americans reflect this usage. Oliver Cromwell, for instance, explained Parliament's success against Charles I during the English Civil War as the product of divine providence – just like that demonstrated during the exodus. Later, though, English Jacobites during the Glorious Revolution cast themselves as Israelites, using the exodus to express hope for restoration of the Stuart monarchy. Some early colonists coming to the "New World" described themselves as Israelites who had left the Egypt of Europe for the Promised Land of the New World. This characterization was continued by later American colonists who considered themselves to be struggling against an oppressive pharaoh, King George III. Less than a century later, many in the southern United States depicted their efforts to secede as a modern exodus, often referring to Abraham Lincoln as pharaoh; northerners, likewise, used various aspects of the exodus to support their cause, including portraying Lincoln as Moses.

People, however, have not only read contemporary events in light of the exodus, but have interpreted the exodus in light of contemporary events. Lincoln Steffens, a leading American journalist and muckraker, came to understand the exodus as a social and political revolution after his experience with the Mexican and Russian revolutions. In his 1926 book, *Moses in Red*, Steffens re-shaped the biblical characters, explaining the biblical pharaoh in terms of a modern dictator, and Moses as a labor leader, while seeing the biblical events as conspiracies, strikes, counter-revolutions, mob violence, and purgings. Michael Walzer, in his work, *Exodus and Revolution*, further develops and traces the exodus as a political revolution.

Even though the exodus theme has been used to support struggles for freedom, it has also been used to support oppression. The Franciscan Gerónimo do Mendieta portrayed the Spanish conquistador Hernando Cortes as bringing Native Americans an exodus-like deliverance from pagan practices. Yet while "delivering" Native Americans, Cortes slaughtered thousands. Similarly, American slaveowners used parts of the exodus to justify the institution of slavery. These kinds of uses have led J. N. K. Mugambi (*From Liberation to Reconstruction*) and others (see R. S. Sugirtharajah's, *Voices from the Margin*) to criticize the use of the exodus as a paradigm for liberation, pointing out that it typically leads to oppression.

**Bibliography:** ■ Glaude Jr., E. S., *Exodus! Religion, Race, and Nation in Early Nineteenth-Century Black America* (Chicago, Ill. 2000). ■ Langston, S. M., *Exodus through the Centuries* (BBC; Malden, Mass. 2006). ■ Luther, M., "Eyn Sermon von dem Hochwirdigen Sacrament, des heyligen waren Leychnams Christi: Und von den Bruderschafften," in *D. Martin Luthers Werke*, vol. 2 (Weimar 1883) 738–58. ■ Luther, M., "The Blessed Sacrament of the Holy and True Body of Christ, and the Brotherhoods," in J. J. Schindel (trans.), *Luther's Works* 35 (ed. E. T. Bachmann; Philadelphia, Pa. 1960) 49–73. ■ Sæbø, M. (ed.), *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation*, vol. 3 (Göttingen 2008). ■ Sugirtharajah, R. S. (ed.), *Voices from the Margin* (Maryknoll, N.Y. ³2006).

*Scott Langston*

## V. Islam

The exodus, the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt and their subsequent wilderness wanderings, occupies an important place in both the Qurʾān and

Muslim imaginings of pre-Islamic history. The Qurʾān presents a number of episodes connected with this period in Israel's history, using elements from the exodus story to communicate important lessons about prophetic leadership, divine providence, revelation, faithfulness, and transgression to its audience. These themes have also been explored in a variety of genres and media by Muslim commentators who have drawn upon the qurʾānic stories of the exodus from earliest Islamic times right up to the present day. In this regard, the construction of an image of Moses not only as the lawgiver of the Israelites but as a prophetic precursor to Muḥammad is of paramount importance. Further, the theophany on Sinai and the revelation of the Torah have often been of concern to Muslim exegetes due both to speculation about the nature of Moses' encounter with God and interest in the Torah itself, especially the question of the validity of the version of the Torah preserved by Jews and Christians. Finally, following a major thematic thread found in the Qurʾān itself, Muslim exegetes have often interpreted certain events of the exodus as demonstrating the sinfulness of Israel and foreshadowing the disconfirmation and eventual subjugation of the Jews as a people humiliated and disgraced in the world on account of their ancestors' sins.

The Qurʾān recognizes the exodus as the defining event in the history of Israel. The sheer number of qurʾānic passages dealing with Moses, the Israelites' redemption and wilderness wanderings, and the revelation of the Torah is striking. A significant amount of this material is found in S 7, *Al-Aʿrāf*, and S 20, *Ṭa-ha*; the latter contains the closest thing to a coherent biography of Moses to be found in the Qurʾān. (Other significant passages, dispersed throughout the Qurʾān, are found, for example, in the major rehearsals of Israelite history such as those in S 2 and 21.) Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that Moses is the single most important prophetic figure in the Qurʾān (excluding, of course, the prophetic figure to whom the Qurʾān itself is addressed); he is mentioned more than 130 times in over thirty of the Qurʾān's 114 chapters.

Perhaps the central theme of the exodus as it is presented in the Qurʾān is that of the contrast between God's providential care for Israel and Israel's perverse rejection of God in spite of the blessings and miracles wrought on their behalf. It is not difficult to discern that the qurʾānic attitude towards the exodus, especially Israel's conduct at that time, is broadly similar to that of both the prophetic literature of ancient Israel itself and early Christian appropriations of prophetic discourse. Whereas the prophets underscore the contrast between God's blessings and Israel's ingratitude as a rhetorical tool meant to instill a contrite openness to repentance and reform among Israelite insiders, both patristic-era Christian exegetes and the Qurʾān utilize the biblical witness to Israel's sins in the desert – especially the worship of the golden calf – as the basis for polemic against Jews from an external position, specifically from that of outsiders who now claim the mantle of divine favor, once bestowed upon Israel, for themselves. The polemical and supersessionist overtones of the qurʾānic versions of narratives dealing with the exodus appear to echo certain Syriac Christian precursors of late antiquity in particular, especially the *Didascalia Apostolorum*, which views the Jewish Law revealed in the Torah as a punitive burden imposed on the Jews for their waywardness.

We find a vast amount of material pertaining to themes, symbols, and episodes associated with the exodus in Muslim literature and tradition. The typical Muslim reading of the story may be summarized in the following way. As the Qurʾān itself avers time and again, the events of the past recounted in Scripture are meant to function as instructive examples for believers, demonstrations of how God has wrought his will throughout history that are to guide the listener to the basic existential choice between good and evil, faith and disbelief, that confronts all created beings. The sequence of events central to the exodus stand as a vivid example of this: the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt through miraculous means, understood less as the realization of a covenantal obligation than as a special gift of grace (*niʿma*) granted to Israel; the election and cultivation of Moses as a genuine divine messenger (*rasūl*), the instrument through whom God's mighty power was displayed in Egypt by means of miracles that demonstrated his validity (*muʿjizāt*), particularly the confrontation with Pharaoh's sorcerers and the summoning of the plagues; the destruction of Pharaoh and his people in the Red Sea, a parable of the ultimate overthrow of all tyrants who defy God or infringe on his sovereignty; the bestowal of the Torah as a particular manifestation of the *kitāb* or timeless revelatory communication between God and humanity, containing both universal laws and regulations particular for Israel; and finally the disobedience of the Israelites in the desert, most of all with their worship of the golden calf, understood as presenting an occasion for repentance (*tawba*), enacted through the peculiar means of an atoning slaughter in which the Israelites were commanded to slay one another.

Treatments of the exodus story in Islamic texts and traditions typically reflect the conventions of particular genres, sectarian ideologies, or even the idiosyncratic interests of individual authors. Thus, works of *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* or "lives of the prophets" focus on imaginative, even fantastic, retellings of miraculous elements from the story for their value as both popular entertainment and a source of pi-

ous edification. In Shīʿī imagining – especially in early Imāmī works of the period before the Occultation of the Twelfth Imām, as well as in some Ismāʿīli works –, Moses' resistance to Pharaoh and his heroic campaigns to lead the faithful to claim their rightful inheritance in the Promised Land is cast as an important precedent not only for Muḥammad himself in his campaigns against the pagan Quraysh, but also for the ʿAlid Imāms, who bravely resisted those within the Muslim fold who denied their claims and persecuted their faithful supporters. Thus, in the political exegesis commonly found in Ismāʿīlī *taʾwīl*, events from the exodus are mythologized into parables of the struggles and eventual redemption of the Shīʿa. The redemption theme is also writ large in the appropriations of the Moses myth by 20th-century activists in Egypt who used it to dramatize and legitimate their jihād against the secular state and the "pharaohs" Nasser and Sadat.

For both Sunnīs and Shīʿa, stories from the exodus provide a platform for critical discussions of religious authority. Shīʿī authors explore in detail such questions as whether Moses transmitted his *waṣiyya* (testamentary legacy) and *wilāya* (delegated authority) to Aaron or Joshua, and when and how the transfer of authority occurred – questions of obvious pertinence to theories of the Imamate. On the other hand, it is the Sunnīs and not the Shīʿa who appear to be most interested in the widely attested Ḥadīth in which Muḥammad says of ʿAlī, "You occupy a position relative to me like that of Aaron to Moses (*bi-manzilat Hārūn min Mūsā*), except there is no prophet after me," one of the most important proofs of the doctrine of *khatm al-nubuwwa* or the cessation of prophecy after Muḥammad.

The *tafsīr* literature often explores and enhances the specifically supersessionist elements in the qurʾānic treatment of the exodus, portraying the Jews as an obsolete, rejected nation, mirroring Christian theological constructs. In classical sources qurʾānic statements such as 7:152,

> Those who took the Calf in worship will be overtaken by the wrath of their Lord and disgrace in the world; thus do We recompense those who fabricate falsehoods,

are taken as proof that the Jews have suffered their characteristic fate as *maqhūrīn*, an oppressed and subjugated people, because of their repeated rejection of God's favor since the time of their redemption from Egypt. Thus, traditional Christian supersessionist claims are given a concrete political correlate, the Jews' status as subalterns provisionally granted Muslim protection – *dhimmīs* – confirming the qurʾānic witness to their ancestors' sins.

Both the qurʾānic and later Muslim understandings of Moses and the Torah are tinged with ambivalence. While Moses is undoubtedly presented as a significant – perhaps the *most* significant – prophetic precursor to Muḥammad, as Wheeler has shown, qurʾānic narratives about Moses' conduct throughout the exodus seem to subtly underscore his failings and thus contrast him negatively with Muḥammad. This negative undercurrent is further elaborated in the *tafsīr*, e.g., in treatments of the story of Moses and the servant of God in S 18:60–101 (not found in the canonical exodus narrative) that emphasize Moses' hubris and arrogance; this portrayal stands in sharp contrast to the tendency in Muslim discourse to idealize the prophets. Similarly, the Torah is a persistent source of fascination for Muslim authors, who have debated the authenticity of the surviving version of this work that is preserved by Jews and Christians and the abrogation of the religious law of Israel enshrined therein. The Torah is simultaneously the paradigmatic example of an obsolete and corrupted revelation and a potential source of genuine divine knowledge, especially where its supposed prefigurations of Islam are concerned.

Qurʾānic material on events from the exodus sometimes resembles the parascriptural and exegetical elaborations on scripture of the Jewish and Christian communities, whereas at other times it is actually most similar to the canonical biblical text itself. It is possible that the distinction between canonical scripture and parascriptural elaboration is one that was not germane to the author or authors of the Qurʾān, although in some cases it is at least feasible that the qurʾānic representation of key events from Israel's history reflects a deliberate attempt to engage and reorient canonical scripture in the mode of "rewritten Torah" (admittedly a problematic term). The same dichotomy is manifest in the *tafsīr*, which sometimes seems very close to exegetical treatments of the exodus cycle found in well-known Jewish and Christian sources, while at other times it almost indisputably stems from translation of and engagement with the canonical precursor itself.

The case of the Decalogue epitomizes the complexity of the qurʾānic and Islamic representation of exodus themes and use of pre-Islamic material from or about exodus itself. There are a number of lists of regulations in the Qurʾān that seem to be allusions to or expansions of the biblical Ten Commandments (e.g., 17:22–39), though the Qurʾān usually does not explicitly associate them with the Torah or the exodus. On the other hand, many other passages allude to the provisions of the Law that were ordained for Israel at that time (*kutiba ʿalayhim,* literally prescribed for them in their *kitāb*), without giving any concrete examples. In turn, Muslim exegetes may or may not recognize passages such as S 17:22–39 as commandments from the biblical Decalogue; some claim, in fact, that these are regulations that were revealed for the *Muslim* community. Alternatively, they might provide other regulations that supposedly constitute the

"Ten Utterances" (*al-kalimāt al-ʿashr*, i.e., δέκα λόγοι) that have no obvious parallel with biblical material that we can recognize. Whether their material is drawn from the canonical Torah, parascriptural Jewish or Christian tradition, or simply invented, the point of Muslim authors' portrayal of and engagement with the exodus is clear: to explain, amplify, and enrich the essential theological, communitarian, and political messages they saw as central to the story of Israel's redemption from Egypt and sojourn in the desert.

**Bibliography:** ***Primary:*** ■ Al-Kisāʾī, *The Tales of the Prophets of al-Kisaʾi* (trans. W. M. Thackston Jr.; Boston, Mass. 1978). [Esp. 208–59] ■ Al-Ṭabarī, *The Children of Israel*, vol. 3 of *The History of al-Ṭabarī* (trans. W. M. Brinner; Albany, N.Y. 1991). [Esp. 30–98] ■ Al-Thaʿlabī, *ʿArāʾis al-majālis fī qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ or "Lives of the Prophets" as recounted by Abū Isḥāq Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Thaʿlabī* (trans. W. M. Brinner; Leiden 2002). [Esp. 278–413] ■ Wheeler, B. M., *Prophets in the Quran: An Introduction to the Quran and Muslim Exegesis* (London 2002). [Esp. 173–242]

***Secondary:*** ■ Adang, C., *Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible* (Leiden 1996). [Esp. 192–248] ■ Guenther, S., "O People of the Scripture! Come to a Word Common to You and Us (Q. 3:64): The Ten Commandments and the Qurʾan," *Journal of Qurʾanic Studies* 9/2 (2007) 28–58. ■ Halverson, J. R. et al., *Master Narratives of Islamist Extremism* (New York 2011). [Esp. 27–36] ■ Pregill, M. E., "'Turn in Repentance to your Creator, then Slay Yourselves': The Levitical Election, Atonement, and Secession in Early and Classical Islamic Exegesis," *Comparative Islamic Studies* 6/1–2 (2010) 101–50. ■ Wheeler, B. M., *Moses in the Quran and Islamic Exegesis* (London 2002).

*Michael E. Pregill*

## VI. Literature

The term "exodus" has broken free from its biblical context to be used of any mass migration. In Vladimir Nabokov's forward to *The Gift* (1963), for example, it simply denotes the departure of intellectuals from mid-20th century Russia; in Tom Omara's *The Exodus* (1968) it describes both ancestral migrations and the expulsion of Asian Africans from postcolonial Uganda. But even in these two somewhat arbitrarily chosen examples, traces of that first ever exodus are not entirely expunged. If nothing else they are introduced by the use of the word "exodus" itself, which carries its own past as the exodus generation carried the bones of its ancestor Joseph.

In Mark Twain's *The Innocents Abroad* (1869), Joseph's postmortem journey and subsequent burial at Shechem are further evidence that the whole promised land is strewn with its past (553). But all landscapes can play host to the exodus, apparently: the literary landscape of Dante's *La Vita nuova* (1295), for example, is transformed from an anthology into a poet's *Bildungsroman* by its division into forty-two chapters – the number of stations of the exodus listed in Num 33; the description of the "Valley of the Shadow of Death" in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678) recalls the exodus wilderness remembered in Jer 2:6–7 (107); and the garden where Leo Bloom urinates with Stephen Dedalus becomes the first destination in an "exodus from the house of bondage" in James Joyce's 1922 *Ulysses* (943).

The voyage of pilgrims across the Atlantic is likened to the exodus at the Red Sea by William Bradford (1590–1657), leader of the Plymouth settlement in Massachusetts (62–63); in the *Magnalia Christi Americana or The Ecclesiastical History of New England* (1702), Cotton Mather likens Bradford himself to a Moses who leads and gives law to his people. But to those many for whom the Atlantic crossing meant slavery not deliverance, the biblical exodus served as a model of freedom yet to come. In *The House of Bondage; or Charlotte Brooks and other Slaves* (1880), e.g., Octavia V. Rogers Albert records the words of Charlotte's Aunt Jane who

> … used to tell us… that the children of Israel was in Egypt in bondage, and that God delivered them… and she said he would deliver us. (31)

"I doubt that there is a stronger theme in the whole musical literature of the world," writes James Weldon Johnson in *The Book of American Negro Poetry* (1922), of the spiritual based on Moses' words to Pharaoh, "Let My People Go!" (XVI). And in response to the *Brown vs. Board of Education* ruling, Martin Luther King Jr. declared that

> … the United States Supreme court opened the Red Sea, and the forces of justice are crossing to the other side … looking back we see the forces of segregation dying on the sea-shore. (Kling: 224)

Certainly, the exodus typically features as a rallying point for political progress: in "The True Levellers' Standard Advanced" (1649), for example, Gerrard Winstanley punctuates his demand for the redistribution of wealth with the phrase, "Let Israel go Free" (Hill: 94); and in his unused design for the reverse of the Great Seal of the Unites States, Benjamin Franklin places the motto, "Rebellion to Tyrants is Obedience to God," above a depiction of Moses leading Israel out of Egypt (Hall: 1).

Elsewhere, however, it is used to more biting effect: in Lady Jane Wilde's "The Exodus" (1864), for example, she laments the departure of Ireland's impoverished masses, often to die on disease ridden ships; in *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), John Steinbeck traces the exodus of tenant farmers from Oklahoma to a Promised Land of slave labor in California; and in Elie Wiesel's *Night*, a young Jew endures an "anti-exodus" through Nazi concentration camps (Cunningham). Finally, and more hopefully, many characters in Leon Uris' *Exodus* (1958), which takes its title from the name of the US immigration ship bringing them to Palestine, are survivors of the camps who will become integral in the founding of the modern state of Israel.