INTRODUCTION

1. Title. Like each of the other four books of the Pentateuch, Exodus is designated by the Jews according to the first phrase of the Hebrew text, We'eleh shemoth, "And these are the names." The name Exodus is a compound of two Greek words meaning "the way out" or "the going out" (of the Israelites from Egypt), and was adopted by English translators from the Vulgate, which in turn took it from the LXX. This term refers, of course, to the central theme of the book. The words, "The Second Book of Moses," do not appear in the Hebrew text but were added at a later time.

2. Authorship. The question of the authorship of the book of Exodus is closely related to that of all the books of the Pentateuch, and Genesis in particular, of which it is the continuation. The book of Exodus plays an important role in the problem of identifying the author of the Pentateuch, since certain of its statements designate Moses as the author of specific parts of it. Moses, for instance, was to record the battle against the Amalekites "in a book" (ch. 17:14). This, together with Num. 33:2, points to the fact that Moses kept a diary. It is evident from Ex. 24:4 that he wrote down the ordinances contained in chs. 20:21 to 23:33, the "book of the covenant" (ch. 24:7). According to ch. 34:27 he is the author of the revelation recorded in vs. 11-26. The evidence preserved in the book of Exodus itself thus points specifically to Moses as the author of historical and other reports found in it. Except for Moses, no individual is mentioned in the Pentateuch as having written any part of it.

The use of many Egyptian words and the accurate description of the Egyptian life and customs appearing in the first part of the book strongly suggest that the author had been educated in Egypt and was intimately acquainted with the country and its culture. No other known Hebrew after the time of Joseph was qualified to write the story of the Exodus. Moses alone seems to have been "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians" (Acts 7:22). The strongest proof of Mosaic authorship, however, is found in the New Testament. In Mark 12:26 Christ quotes from Ex. 3:6, and refers to His source as "the book of Moses" (see GC 434). These three considerations (the direct witness of the book itself, the indirect evidence that the author was educated in Egypt, and the testimony of Christ) all guarantee the accuracy of the Jewish tradition that Moses wrote the book of Exodus.

3. Historical setting. Moses' first book, Genesis, presents a brief outline of the history of God's chosen ones from the creation of the world to the close of the patriarchal age, a period of many centuries. In its first two chapters, however, Exodus, the continuation of Genesis, covers only about 80 years, and in the remainder of the book but a year or so.

Though the absence of archeological evidence prevents our dogmatizing on various points of the history of the Israelites in Egypt, there seems to be sufficient evidence to justify the conclusion that Joseph and Jacob entered Egypt during the time of the Hyksos. These Semitic rulers were friendly toward their racial relatives, the Hebrews, and under them Joseph rose to honor and fame. As foreign invaders and rulers, however, the Hyksos would be hated by native Egyptians even though they might rule with a light hand and work in the interests of their subjects.

When the Hyksos had ruled over Egypt for some 150 years (c. 1730-1580 b.c.), Sekenenre, a local Egyptian prince of Upper Egypt and vassal of the Hyksos, revolted. The record of this rebellion appears in a legendary story of later date, and does not reveal the success or failure of his attempt to restore the independence of Egypt. His mummy shows terrible head wounds, mute witness to a violent death, incurred, perhaps, on the battlefield as he fought the Hyksos.
The real struggle for freedom began with Kamose, the son and successor of Sekenenre. He succeeded in expelling the Hyksos from Upper and Middle Egypt and limiting their power to the eastern Delta region. Yet, Kamose did not live to see the ultimate expulsion of the Hyksos. This was accomplished by his younger brother Ahmose, who defeated the hated enemies and forced the surrender of their capital city, Avaris. With the fall of Avaris the Hyksos lost their last stronghold in Egypt. They then withdrew to Sharuhen in southern Palestine, which in turn was conquered by Ahmose after a three years' campaign. The loss of Sharuhen, and the resulting retreat of the Hyksos to the north, marked the end of their power and their disappearance from history.

Having successfully defeated the Hyksos, the rulers of Thebes became undisputed monarchs of all Egypt. As kings of the Eighteenth Dynasty they not only liberated Egypt but subjugated Nubia and Palestine as well, and built a strong and wealthy empire. It was only natural for those rulers, who "knew not Joseph" (Ex. 1:8), to view with suspicion these strangers, the Israelites, who occupied the land of Goshen in the eastern Delta. Native Egyptians could not be expected to trust them, for they had settled there under the Hyksos, were racially related to them, and had been favored by them.

The chronology of the kings of the Eighteenth Dynasty has not yet been fixed definitely. The following dates, though based on the best available evidence, are only approximately correct. Ahmose was followed by Amenhotep I (1546-1525 b.c.), who campaigned in the south and west. His son Thutmose I (1525-1508 b.c.), who pressed his Syrian campaign to the river Euphrates, was the first king to record the use of Asiatic slaves in the construction of his temples. It is possible that he refers to the Hebrews. He was followed by his weak son, Thutmose II (1508-1504 b.c.), after whose death Hatshepsut, a daughter of <page 493> Thutmose I, ruled Egypt peacefully for 22 years (1504-1482 b.c.). It is probable that she became the foster mother of Moses, since the first 40 years of his life came during the reigns of Thutmose I, Thutmose II, and Hatshepsut. According to the Biblical chronology adopted for this commentary, Moses fled from Egypt a few years before the beginning of the sole reign of Thutmose III.

At the beginning of Hatshepsut's reign a revolution of the priests had forced her to accept the coregency of her nephew, Thutmose III. Her sudden disappearance, later, may have been due either to violence or to natural causes. If, as seems plausible, Hatshepsut was the princess who adopted Moses, this revolt of the priests may have come as a result of Moses' refusal to become a member of the priestly caste (see PP 245). As soon as Thutmose III became sole ruler (1482-1450 b.c.) he set out for Palestine on a military campaign, and defeated a coalition of Syrian and Palestinian princes at Megiddo. His Asiatic empire was held together by a show of strength, through annual campaigns. Like his grandfather, he states that Asiatic slaves were employed in his temple-building program. He was probably the Pharaoh from whom Moses fled. After Thutmose III, his son Amenhotep II came to the throne (1450-1425 b.c.). He began a reign of calculated frightfulness over his foreign possessions, and fits remarkably well into the role of the Pharaoh of the Exodus. For some reason, unmentioned in non-Biblical records, it was not the crown prince but another son of Amenhotep II, Thutmose IV (1425-1412 b.c.), who followed him on the throne. The disappearance of the crown prince may have been due to the slaying of all first-born sons in the tenth plague of Egypt.

Such is the historical background of the dramatic events described so vividly in the book of Exodus. No contemporary, non-Biblical records of the Exodus exist, for the Egyptians never recorded events unfavorable to them.

4. Theme. The chief purpose of Moses in writing Exodus was to describe God's marvelous intervention on behalf of His chosen people, in delivering them from slavery, and His gracious condescension in entering into covenant relation with them. To show that neither their repeated unfaithfulness nor the opposition of the greatest nation of earth could thwart God's plan for them, is the theme that runs through the book like a golden thread. The stories of the Exodus speak to the imagination of the young and strengthen the faith of those who are older. They call for confidence in God's leadership today, and bid us to follow humbly wherever He may lead.
5. Outline.
I. The Exodus From Egypt. 1:1 to 15:21.
   A. The sojourning in Egypt. 1:1-22.
      2. Growth and oppression of the children of Israel in Egypt. 1:7-22.
   B. Moses' preparation for leadership. 2:1 to 4:31.
      2. Murder, flight, and sojourn in Midian. 2:11-22.
      4. The call to Moses. 3:1 to 4:17.
   C. The ten plagues and the Exodus. 5:1 to 13:16.
      1. Moses and Aaron's first appearance before Pharaoh. 5:1-18.
      2. Renewal of God's promise to deliver Israel. 5:19 to 6:12.
      5. The first plague: water changed to blood. 7:14-25.
      8. The fourth plague: flies. 8:20-32.
      10. The sixth plague: boils. 9:8-12.
      14. The pronunciation of the tenth plague and the institution of the Passover. 11:1 to 12:28.
      15. The tenth plague: all the first-born slain. 12:29, 30.
      17. Instructions regarding the Passover and the first-born. 12:43 to 13:16.
   D. From Egypt to Sinai. 13:17 to 19:2.
      4. Quails and manna in the Wilderness of Sin. 16:1-36.
      6. The victory over Amalek at Rephidim. 17:8-16.
      7. The visit of Jethro. 18:1-27.
      8. Arrival at Sinai. 19:1, 2.

II. Israel at Sinai. 19:3 to 40:38.
   A. The giving of the Decalogue. 19:3 to 20:21.
      1. The divine manifestation. 19:3-25.
      2. The Decalogue. 20:1-17.
      3. Israel's terror. 20:18-21.


D. Directives concerning the tabernacle and its furniture. 25:1 to 31:17.
   2. The ark. 25:10-22.

E. Moses given the two tables of stone. 31:18.

F. Apostasy, and renewal of the covenant. 32:1 to 34:35.
   1. The golden calf. 32:1 to 33:11.
   3. The new stone tablets. 34:1-35.

G. The building of the tabernacle and its furniture. 35:1 to 40:38.
   1. New exhortation to keep the Sabbath. 35:1-3.
   2. Gifts for the tabernacle. 35:4-29.
   4. The curtains and coverings. 36:8-38.
   6. The table of shewbread. 37:10-16.
   11. The laver. 38:8.
   15. Moses inspects the work and erects the tabernacle. 39:32 to 40:38. Fine flour (Lev. 2:1, 2).