

The Reception of Exodus Motifs in Christian, Jewish, and Islamic Writings

Edited by
BEATE KOWALSKI and
AGNETHE SIQUANS

History of Biblical Exegesis

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Editors

Mark W. Elliott, Jennie Grillo, Michael Legaspi,
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Introduction

Beate Kowalski and Agnethe Siquans

The Exodus of the Israelite slaves from Egypt under Moses is one of the foundational narratives of the Hebrew Bible, and its retelling has shaped Jewish and Christian identity and theology across the centuries. Many literary forms have been employed to reflect on the significance of this story, including hymns, wisdom writings, apocalyptic visions, and creeds. A decisive factor in its enduring powerful appeal is the fundamental human concern for liberation from oppression.

The present volume has come a long way. In 2020 a first conference was planned on “The Reception of Exodus Motifs in Jewish and Christian Literature.” Unfortunately, due to the Covid pandemic, it had to be cancelled. Nevertheless, we proceeded with the publication of the papers. The first volume in the series “Themes in Biblical Narrative” (TBN), edited by Beate Kowalski and Susan Docherty, was published in autumn 2021. Of course, research on the topic continued. Several contributors were invited to present their results in academic circles. Susan Docherty and Beate Kowalski presented the main results at the “Neutestamentliche Sozietät Wuppertal” in April 2021. Beate Kowalski presented her research on Exodus in 1 Peter in the same circle, followed by a response paper given by Karl-Heinrich Ostmeyer in June 2021. It was a great honour to present the project to the German section of the ESWTR (European Society of Women in Theological Research) in February 2022 and the “German English Colloquium” of the “Institut zur Erforschung des Urchristentums e.V.” at the University of Tübingen in November 2022. Finally, a paper on methodological issues was offered at the conference of the Slovak Academy of Sciences in Košice in September 2022. The questions and feedback from colleagues were very supportive and contributed to the development of the project. A second conference was therefore planned with a focus on Exodus motifs in Christian (NT and Patristics), Jewish (Rabbinics), and Islamic writings. It was held entirely online from May 12th–13th, 2022.

This volume presents the conference papers of the second conference. The reception of Exodus motifs is understood in a broad sense, encompassing diverse references to the Book of Exodus as a text as well as its narrative in its various versions – including oral transmission – or parts of it. Some texts are interpretations of the biblical book in the proper sense; others quote from it or allude to it. Some texts refer to the story or single motifs, such as Moses’ leprosy, to tell

their own stories. This proves once again the widespread distribution and great significance of the Exodus as a fundamental narrative of Jewish and Christian communities, which also had an effect on Islam.

The opening chapter serves as a bridge to the first volume. The first chapter is a contribution to foundational research, in particular to the tools available to exegetes for intertextual research (e.g. the list “*Loci citati vel allegati*” in N-A²⁸, GNT⁵). In reviewing and applying these tools, it became apparent how inadequate they are. The result of this research is outlined in *Beate Kowalski’s* introductory article. This means that the first chapter does not deal with the reception of Exodus motifs in the New Testament but rather analyses the methodological starting point. The need for a revision of the marginalia was also discussed with Prof. Holger Strutwolf, director of the Institute for New Testament Text Research (INTF). Currently, we are planning a research project to address this desideratum. This is precisely the current state of research. Before reliable results on the reception of Old Testament writings in the New Testament can be produced, the marginalia must be revised and integrated into the online Bible editions.

The research outcomes published in the first volume have drawn attention to gaps in research, which are intended to be addressed by the contributions to the present volume. The chapters of the present volume will focus on one hand on the Apostolic Fathers and Church Fathers, and on the other on the reception of Exodus in rabbinic writings. The last contribution addresses the Islamic reception in the Qu’ran.

After the introductory chapter, which surveys the New Testament, *Karl-Heinrich Ostmeier* looks at several Exodus motifs in the letters of Paul. According to his thesis, drawing on the Exodus reception in the Rabbinic writings proves crucial to understanding Paul’s reasoning and his theology first. Without considering the Exodus reception in Rabbinic and pseudepigraphic writing, the New Testament argumentation is not comprehensible in several places. The reception of Exodus motifs in the writings of the Apostolic and Church Fathers is examined by Joseph Verheyden (Justin), Marco Rizzi (Origen), and Josef Lössl (Latin Church Fathers: Augustine). *Joseph Verheyden* analyses Justin’s allusions and citations from Jewish Scripture. According to him, they serve a double purpose: getting at the heart of his opponent’s faith (or exposing his lack of faith or his misunderstanding of his own tradition) and demonstrating that Christian interpretation, as a rule, surpasses anything Jewish tradition has produced in interpreting its Scripture. *Marco Rizzi* focuses on Origen’s reception of Exodus narratives in three steps. He examines what has been preserved of Origen’s explicit exegesis of Exodus and its links with the pre-existing Jewish and Christian readings of the book of the Bible. Secondly, he illustrates the cornerstone of Origen’s interpretation, that is, stressing the need for a spiritual reading of Exodus and reducing literal and historical implications. Finally, he considers three

moments of the ‘journey of the soul’ as symbolised by the Exodus narrative (the descent of the Jews into Egypt; the journey in the desert and the building of the Temple; the episode of the plundering of the Egyptians). *Josef Lössl* looks at how Exodus already influenced the biblical and early Christian tradition preceding Augustine. His chapter demonstrates how Augustine engaged with this motif in two very different ways and in two different types of works. In addition, he provides an example for an alternative approach to the motif from Augustine’s own time, the anonymous Pelagian treatise *De induratione cordis Pharaoni*. Three articles examine the broad range of the reception of Exodus motifs in rabbinic literature. *Günter Stemberger* offers a brief survey of the reception of the Book of Exodus in rabbinic literature from the 3rd to the 12th century. It is preceded by a few remarks on the importance of the Exodus in daily prayer, the religious commandments, synagogue art, and the home liturgy of the Pesah Haggadah, where the Book of Exodus is much less prominent than might be expected. The rabbinic works dealt with are the Mekhilta de-Rabbi Yishmael, both Talmudim and some later Midrashim. *Lieve Teugels*, a renowned specialist in rabbinic parables, deals with some rather unexpected or unconventional themes in the rabbinic Jewish exegesis of the Exodus, namely the empathy, or “humanness” of God; and the weakness, and thus also “humanness,” of Moses. *Agnethe Siquans* analyses the late rabbinic Midrash Shemot Rabbah which interprets the entire biblical Book of Exodus. It focuses on the relationship between YHWH and his people Israel. The “three precious gifts” God gave to Israel, the Torah, the land, and the world to come are important topics for the Rabbis. She underlines that through their interpretation of the biblical book, the Rabbis assert their readers’ identity as God’s beloved people in contrast to the other nations, especially the Christians, who are seen as idolaters. They admonish their audience to keep the Torah and reinforce their hope for deliverance, even with a view to the final redemption.

In the last section, *Kate Tinson* examines the reception of Exod 4; 7 in the Qu’ran by interpreting the most prominent example of Moses’ leprous hand from his prophetic commissioning in Exod 4. This scene is unclear with respect to the question as to why Moses is struck with leprosy and whether he is tainted with guilt, leading many rabbinic commentators to ultimately suppose that his objections caused God to become angry, leading to Moses’ leprosy. In the Qur’an, this scene has been transformed by the replacement of the word “leprous” with “white” and an addition of a version of this scene to a narrative featuring Pharaoh and his sorcerers (Exod 7).

The contributions to this volume open up the rich treasure of the ancient culture of remembrance of the great event of the Exodus from Egyptian slavery and its manifold biblical interpretations. Commonalities and differences in the history of Jewish, Christian, and Islamic reception are made clear. All authors include reflections on methodology, tools, and hermeneutics. In comparing the various receptions of Exodus motifs in ancient religious writings, Paul Ricoeur’s

theory that a text becomes semantically independent of the intention of its author after it is written is proven true. The new historical and literary context decisively determines the reception of the Exodus motifs.

At the end of this introduction, we would like to express our sincere gratitude to all those who have made the realisation of this volume possible: We are most grateful to the DFG (German Research Foundation) for their generous funding for an international conference on the topic. Again, due to the coronavirus pandemic, we sadly had to organise an online conference. We cordially thank all speakers and moderators of the conference, in particular Prof. Dr. Joseph Verheyden (Leuven) and Prof. Karl-Heinrich Ostmeyer (Dortmund). We extend our sincere gratitude to the editors of the series HBE, the publisher Mohr Siebeck, in particular Tobias Stäbler. We cordially thank Katharina Rötzer, administrative assistant in the Department of Biblical Studies of the Faculty of Catholic Theology at the University of Vienna for the accurate compilation of the indexes. Last but not least, many thanks to Dr. Antonia Krainer (Vienna) and Prof. Dr. Josef Lössl (Cardiff) for the thorough and quick language editing.

I Exodus Motifs in Christian Writings

Loci Citati vel Allegati Revisited

Future Research

Beate Kowalski

Introduction

The first chapter was originally intended to provide an overview of the reception of Exodus motifs in the writings of the NT (see Ehorn 2022; Dozeman/Evans/Lohr 2014; Otto 2024; Marshall/Schüle 2023). Three questions took centre stage: 1. Which Exodus motifs are used particularly frequently in the NT, which only rarely, which not at all? 2. When (i. e. in which contexts) and why do NT authors reuse Exodus motifs? 3. Which reception techniques are used by the authors of the NT (recontextualisation)?

To answer these questions, all the allusions and quotations from the Book of Exodus listed in N-A²⁸ and GNT⁵ were critically analysed. The question of the reliability of these lists quickly arose. Valid conclusions on the above questions are only possible if these lists are based on reliable quality criteria.

1. Methodological Considerations

Technical terms must be well defined and (where possible) used consistently for exegetes to understand each other. For this reason, the sometimes controversial research discussions in this regard are presented below. The following technical terms are used among exegetes:

- Allusion: correspondence with a shorter sequence of words, consisting of at least two relevant nouns, no citation formula
- Quotation: verbatim correspondence with a longer sequence of words, possibly but not necessarily introduced by a citation formula
- Structural parallel: correspondence with a longer text passage or a whole work
- Overarching framework: Allusions and/or quotations are cross-linked to form an overall concept

However, there is no standardised terminology and methodology. A wide range of terms can be found. Thus, Gregory K. Beale distinguishes between clear/probable/possible allusions or echoes (Beale 2001, 23–33); Jon Paulien uses the terms certain/probable/possible allusions and non-allusion (Paulien 2001, 5–22).

Stanley E. Porter lists all technical terms he is aware of: citation, direct quotation, formal quotation, indirect quotation, allusive quotation, allusion (whether conscious or unconscious), paraphrase, exegesis (such as inner-biblical exegesis), midrash, typology, reminiscence, echo (whether conscious or unconscious), intertextuality, influence (either direct or indirect), and even tradition (Porter 1997, 80). Above all, technical terms are defined differently depending on the particular section of the NT. In particular, other terms are used for the Revelation of John (Sverre Bøe speaks about correspondences; Bøe 2001). L. Gregory Bloomquist applies the terms reference, recitation, recontextualisation, and re-configuration (Bloomquist 1999, 181–203). We could continue this discussion with further intertextual experts such as Steve Moyise, Michael Sommer (2015), Stefan Alkier, Thomas Hieke, and Tobias Nicklas (2015). “The cacophony of competing terms and definitions currently in use in Biblical Studies increases the chances for misunderstanding and imprecision” (Allen 2017, 7). In addition, it is necessary to pay attention to references, recitation, re-contextualisation, and re-configuration as follows:

- *reference* (With what texts and textual traditions are these phrases in dialogue?)
- *recitation* (exact, modified, or different words)
- *re-contextualisation* (placing of attributes, narration or speech in a new context without announcing its previous attribution)
- *re-configuration* (modification of a word, phrase, topic, or theme) (Bloomquist 1999)

The common working tools are: GNT⁵, N-A²⁷, N-A²⁸, LXX project Wuppertal, Archer–Chirichigno (Archer/Chirichigno 1983/2005). Unfortunately, none of these working aids are based on a definition of the terms or follow defined criteria. N-A²⁷/N-A²⁸ lists allusions and quotations in one list, following the order of the OT writings. GNT⁵ provides several lists: an index of quotations, following the OT order; an index of quotations, following the NT order; and an index of allusions and verbal parallels, following the OT order. N-A²⁷/N-A²⁸ does not mention any criteria for allusions. As we learned from the editorial team of the Nestle-Aland, the lists were prepared based on the old German Lutheran translation by different people. GNT⁵ continuously provides better tools as the editors define an allusion as follows: “definite allusions, where it is assumed that the writer had in mind a specific passage of Scripture” (p. 56*); “literary and other parallels” are not clearly defined.

Both lists give the impression of atomistic use of the OT by NT authors. Neither the original nor the new context is respected (Kowalski 2019, 86–102):

When we talk about allusions and quotations, we need to be aware that NT authors use single verses or expressions to evoke the larger context of each. Apart from paying attention to linguistic details, the literary context of a singular verse plays a decisive part in understanding how an NT author dealt with OT writings. Authors often use the over-

arching structure of a textual unit to evoke a memory of the source tradition. (Kowalski 2016, 40)

Some allusions, therefore, function as a kind of insider language: familiar motifs or themes are echoed to remind the recipients of the original larger narrative. The mention of OT figures such as Moses or Miriam, for example, will evoke different memories of narratives about them in the readers, depending on their level of knowledge. In particular, composite allusions reveal a sense of the original contexts.

When reviewing the lists, I applied my definition, which I developed for my habilitation thesis. I suggest the following distinctions between linguistic and motivic level, stylistic and structural level, and contextual and communicative level (author-recipient). Concerning the linguistic criteria, we require the minimum agreement of two relevant words (except for hapax legomena). Attention should be paid to cross-verse allusions in cases where the sentence structure goes beyond the subsequently inserted verse division. We assume that the term allusion must be used in a broader sense and does not only mean the level of literal or approximately literal reproduction of a source text. An atomistic understanding of allusions does not correspond to ancient text production.

The following survey deals only with allusions and quotations from Exodus, not with Exodus motifs that NT authors received from other OT writings such as prophetic or wisdom writings. This means that the process of rewriting OT texts and motifs is not considered here. Thus, numerous Exodus motifs that can be found in Isa and Ps, which are of utmost importance for the NT, are neglected even though NT authors often read the Exodus narrative through the lens of these two central Scriptures.

2. Statistics

The lists in N-A²⁸ (*Loci Citati vel Allegati*) and GNT⁵ (Index of Quotations, Index of Allusions, and Verbal Parallels) serve as the basis for the statistics. We are aware that both text-critical editions of the Greek NT do not focus on the reception of the OT in the NT and, therefore, have not applied criteria for the terms “allusion” and “quotation” in their lists. It is, therefore, not possible to cover all possible references to Exodus motifs in the NT. Nevertheless, with these lists, tendencies can be discerned that allow us to identify focal points in the reception. Transferring the data into an Excel database has proven very helpful for an initial evaluation.

Significant differences in the two text-critical editions can be seen in the Gospels, Acts, and to a lesser extent in the Proto-Pauline Epistles, in Heb and Rev. One reason for these differences may be the different categorisation: GNT⁵ defines the term allusion more broadly (Index of Allusions and Verbal Parallels)

than N-A²⁸ and therefore also lists longer sections of text segments. Furthermore, the lack of a definition of the technical terms “allusion” and “quotation” must be pointed out. Finally, it can be assumed that the editors read the NT texts with different interests and their own criteria of observation in mind.

Table 1: Quotations according to GNT5 and N-A28

GNT ⁵	N-A ²⁸
24x Matt – 8 quotations	31x Matt, of which 6 quotations
3x Mark – 2x Mark 14	30x Mark, of which 4 quotations
16x Luke, of which 3x quotations – higher incidences in Luke 1–2	31x Luke, of which 1 quotation
6x John, of which 1 quotation (19:36) – higher incidences in John 1:1–18	11x John, of which 2x quotations (John 19:36)
49x <i>Gospels</i>	103x <i>Gospels</i>
40x Acts, of which 9 quotations – higher incidences in Acts 7	43x Acts, of which 34x in Acts 7 – in total 9 quotations
89 <i>Gospels + Acts</i>	146 <i>Gospels + Acts</i>
8x Rom, of which 4 quotations – 6x in Rom 9	8x Rom, 6x in Rom 9 – in total 3 quotations
8x 1 Cor, of which 1x quotation – higher incidences in 1 Cor 10	6x 1 Cor, of which 4x 1 Cor 10
9x 2 Cor, of which 1x quotation – higher incidences in (7x) in 2 Cor 3	9x 2 Cor, of which 6x 2 Cor 3, of which 2 quotations
1x Gal	1x Gal
1 Phil	0x Phil
0x Phlm	0x Phlm
0x 1 Thess	0x 1 Thess
17x <i>Proto-Pauline Epistles</i>	24x <i>Proto-Pauline Epistles</i>
1x Eph	0x Eph
0x 2 Thess	0x 2 Thess
0x 1 Tim	1x 1 Tim
2x 2 Tim, both in chapter 3	2x 2 Tim, both in chapter 3
0x Titus	1x Titus
26x Heb, of which 3 quotations – higher incidences in Heb 9; 11	29x Heb, of which 1 quotation – higher incidences in Heb 9; 11
3x in <i>Deutero-Pauline Epistles</i>	4x in <i>Deutero-Pauline Epistles</i>
26x <i>Heb</i>	32x <i>Heb</i>
1x Jas	2x Jas, of which 1 quotation
3x 1 Pet, of which 1 quotation – all incidences in 1 Pet 2	1x 1 Pet
0x 2 Pet	0x 2 Pet
0x 1 John	2x 1 John
0x 2 John	0x 2 John
0x 3 John	0x 3 John
4x in the <i>Catholic Epistles</i>	5x in the <i>Catholic Epistles</i>
30x Rev – higher incidences in Rev 15–16	31x Rev
179 <i>allusions and quotations</i>	239 <i>allusions and quotations</i>

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