

## The Bible in Context Ep 23: Abram's Exodus Out of Babylon Gen 12:1-10

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00:00

Welcome back to the Bible in Context. Hey Nate. Hey, how are you doing? Doing good. How about yourself? Doing well. Excited to get back into Genesis. Yeah. Yeah, we just left off with the Tower of Babel and we talked a little bit about the genealogy afterwards and we led up to Abraham. So now we're going to get to talk about Abraham's Exodus.

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because this is another story where the Exodus motif shows up. Hopefully you can't hear all the static behind us, but it is pouring. And you can hear it on the roof, but we're going to go ahead and talk about Abraham's Exodus. So with Abraham's Exodus, he starts out in a very similar place as the Israelites. We've already talked about how the Tower of Babylon was, it was Babylon, but there's also potential associations with Assyrian oppression. And there was one more thing from last week that I didn't.

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mentioned that I really wanted to and can't believe I forgot. And that's that in this story the word bricks is used three times. They want to brick bricks and they make the tower out of these bricks. It's a kind of funny saying but when it says in Hebrew that let us make bricks they're literally saying let us brick bricks. So anyway that that word bricks, libenah, is used three times in Genesis 11 3. And then we don't see that word show up again

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until Exodus 1.14 and then it occurs seven times in Exodus 5. So we have concentrations of the word brick in Genesis 11 and in the Exodus story, linking the oppression of Egypt to Babylon, to the Tower of Babylon in that city. So this is again an oppressive nation, oppressive city, just like Egypt is.

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cities that are evil or rebellious. We had the one back in the city of Cain. We're gonna see it again in Saddam Gawarra. Yeah, yeah, there's this theme with the cities being places of rebellion and then...

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We also kind of transition from the first couple of exoduses were seen as the waters were the places of Ruin and chaos that we start off in so Adam was given exodus out of the chaos waters Right of pre-creation Noah was given exodus out of a violent people right through the waters Right now we're kind of done with the cosmic waters thing, but we've transitioned fully into the coming out and through

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chaotic and ruinous civilizations, violent peoples. So as we continue through Genesis, we're going to see less about cosmic waters and more of violent nations. To begin this Exodus, we're told that Terah takes his family from Mesopotamia, from Ur of the Chaldeans, and he goes to Haran. He stops there and dwells there, and then it's not until after his death that Abram picks up and continues his journey to Canaan. Now while

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Abraham is inherent is that's when he gets his call to go to Canaan. According to Genesis. According to Genesis. But when we read Acts seven, we're told by Stephen, what did he say? Acts seven. Yeah. So in Acts seven, Stephen, this is right before he's about to be stoned. And he shares kind of the history of the Israelites. And he starts his, his little mini sermon by saying, brothers and fathers, hear me, the God of glory appeared to our father Abraham.

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when he was in Mesopotamia before he lived in Haran. Yeah, so there's another verse in Genesis that might hint to what Stephen is talking about. It's possible that Abram was called when he was in Mesopotamia. He goes to Haran with his father because maybe because of this call, Abram sets out to go to Canaan, but he stops with his father halfway in Haran and stays there and ignores his call and then is recalled in Haran. That's...

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It's possible that's the case. Yeah, we're never told why he stops in Haran. It's the place of his father's death. Maybe his father was ill at that point and just wasn't able to travel anymore. Who knows? Or they got halfway there and realized things are OK here. Let's just stay here and forget the mission and not stay faithful to Yahweh. It may have been Abram picking up from a previous failure. But it is just interesting that in Genesis 31, 53, the verse I mentioned a minute ago,

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It says whenever Laban is talking to Jacob, he says in reference to Yahweh, the God of Abram, the God of Nahor, and the God of their father judge between us. And so just in this passage, Laban sees Yahweh as the God of Abram, Nahor's brother, and Terah, his father. And so they very well could have all been following Yahweh out of Mesopotamia. They're all faithful to this call, but they, you know, they get halfway and they stop.

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possibly because they were being unfaithful to that call. And yet, Laban did say this, so some might hear that and say, well, that's Laban, that's not Yahweh or the narrator saying that. And that is true, but we gotta remember that this is a very crafted narrative, and the author is the one who put those words into Laban's mouth, or at least chose to record them. All that to say, Abram's original call very well may have started in Mesopotamia. He comes to Haran with his father, and he stays there, possibly forgetting

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the call he was originally given and then in Genesis 12, Yahweh comes to him and recommissions Abram despite his failure in stopping the journey previously. The rest of the story of Genesis doesn't necessarily hang on that point. I think it's just worth bringing up. It's kind of interesting and also reconciles that something that some may call a contradiction between Acts and Genesis. So Abram, he comes out from these violent people, from this Egypt-like people from Babylon.

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And he's not coming out of the waters anymore like Noah and Adam, but he's coming out of this violent people. And then just like, I'm going to go through some of the steps of the Exodus in this narrative that correspond between this narrative and the Exodus of Israel and some of the correspondences to Noah's flood Exodus as well, just to kind of show the links as we travel through Genesis. So again, I'm not going to read all of the verses.

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but I just want to show some of these steps to show how this motif is at work in the narrative. So just like in the flood, Yahweh remembered Noah in the flood. And here Yahweh sees the wicked city and then he comes to act on that city. In the same way in the Exodus, Yahweh comes and hears and sees his people in their oppression. There's this element within the Exodus motif of Yahweh coming to know or to remember or to see the oppression of his people or the oppression of the wicked.

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people and to come do something about it. So also in the flood we had the dark waters being separated. In this narrative, we've already talked about Peleg a little bit, there might be a hint of not the waters being separated but the people who represent the sea monster and the chaos of the sea being separated or divided. And then also in Exodus we have the Sea of Reeds, the Red Sea being divided in Exodus 14.

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That one's a potential correspondence. Like we said, we're not too sure about the P. lag element. In Genesis 10:25, that may be the author hinting that the forces of the sea serpent, in a way, were divided, but we're not entirely sure. Yeah, it's interesting, just talking about the comparison between the chaotic waters, and now we're looking at more chaotic people that got his.

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rescuing their experiencing exodus not out of water but out of chaotic people that language between In the Psalms you see people who rise up against Israel and cause chaos Are constantly compared to raging water or floods or that that idea is very much intertwined in the minds of These ancient writers. Yeah, the we talked about this a little bit in creation on this podcast

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the waters of the sea serpent, the sea monster, Leviathan, chaotic and ruinous nations, violent nations that are enemies of God's people. They're all kind of wrapped up in this same idea. They bear the same connotations and sometimes are swapped out poetically like you're saying. And with that, just like we saw in Noah's flood, the waters were restrained, the sea was restrained, the enemies of Yahweh were defeated in the flood. Here we have the Babylonians defeated and scattered.

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Also, you know, the Egyptians will be defeated at the Exodus. And I think this part's kind of cool actually. So in Genesis 8, 5, and 13, we see that the dry land appears for Noah after he gets off the ark, just like the dry land appeared for Adam at creation. And also in the Exodus, when the Sea of Reed separates in Exodus 14, 21, the dry land appears. And then here in Genesis 12, verse 1, it says,

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go to the land that I will show you. Now, in English, the words show and appear are different words. But in Hebrew, it's the same word, ra. It's basically, he's saying, go to land I will make you see. Go to the land that I will make appear to you. So it's the same word going on there. We have land appearing in all three or all four of these Exoduses so far. Now again, just like at the Exodus,

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Israel comes out as a mixed multitude with great possessions. We see that Abram in chapter 12 verse 5, he comes out with his wife, Lot, and all their possessions that they had gathered and all the persons that they had acquired and herons. So again, they have great possessions and a mixed multitude. He also comes out as a new humanity. We've already talked about how Israel comes out as a new humanity and how Adam was the original new human. And then...

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Noah by going through this cosmic de-creation, re-creation became a new humanity. And we talked about as well that new creation is also described as being separated out and then designated for something else. That's how ancient Near Easterners thought of new creation, that functional ontology idea. And here we see Abraham, he's being separated out from Babylon essentially, from the chaos, and he's being designated as a new nation that will be used to bless the nations.

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made a new creation, just as Israel will be when they're made into a kingdom of priests. So we saw in the creation and in Noah's flood that when the land reappears, there's a temple that is made. The Garden of Eden is the temple. There's also Noah's garden or mountaintop garden that kind of has some temple and Edenic connotations. Now here in Genesis, we have Abram coming to Yahweh's land.

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that is also being made to appear to Abram, and that's where he comes to the oak of Moray. Now, the oak of Moray means teacher. We haven't seen any trees in the biblical story since the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life. So Abram is coming through this exodus into Yahweh's land and comes to the tree of not the knowledge of good and evil, but the tree of teaching. And then we see he also moves on from there after he builds an altar and comes to, in

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the hill country. Now the hill country, that sounds like a whole lot of different, like a whole range of hills and mountains, right? Well, in Hebrew that's actually a singular hill. He comes to the hill or the mountain.

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The word for hill and mountain in Hebrew are the same words. It's just what they think of as a mountain we might call a hill. Sometimes the translators will translate this as hill. I don't know why they translated it in the plural here. I guess because it's not specific which mountain it is. But I think that we're supposed to see, again, Abram coming to this land that has appeared to him. He comes to this tree of teaching. He comes to this mountain afterwards where he's offering up sacrifices and building altars.

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links back into the previous garden and Exodus narratives, the previous temple narratives. These sacrifices that Abram's making also have links back to Noah's mountaintop sacrifice after he got off the ark and gets onto Mount Ararat. So we kind of have this same temple creation idea going on in this narrative. And then so here we have Abram resting on this mountain.

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communing with Yahweh just as in these other stories and as Israel would commune with Yahweh at Sinai or at the Tabernacle when they build that. I'm trying to translate this to audio the best I can going through all these steps. I hope it's coming through that at least that this motif is active in this narrative and we'll talk a little bit about what it's doing here afterwards. But we also see just like with Adam and with Noah and with Israel later that

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He is blessed to be fruitful and multiply at the beginning of chapter 12. And just as Adam is commissioned to subdue and Israel is commissioned to subdue the land, Abram's enemies will be cursed by Yahweh. He'll have victory over them. As his blessings progress throughout the narrative, we'll see that he is going to possess the gate of his enemies. So we have the same subduing commission as well. And then through his sacrifices, his communing with Yahweh, his purification.

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of himself and the family he has brought through this exodus. He bears some priestly qualities as Israel will, as Noah did when he offered his sacrifices on the mountain. And then through this command to come out of Mesopotamia and go to Canaan, he's not given a covenant like Adam or, well, not Adam, like Noah was, but he is given a command similar to how Adam was given a command.

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and his obedience to this command is going to determine whether or not he takes the blessings of Yahweh because if he decides not to go to the land, well, that's the deal. He will become fruitful and multiply if he goes. Yeah, and I think that's significant because a lot of times the covenant with Abraham, people talk about it as being completely unconditional. But we see right here, I mean in the text, there was a condition. You had to go to the land. You got to go. Right, yeah.

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Yeah, without actual, without obedience, and it's not like it was something hard. He didn't give him something unattainable. It was just, you need to trust me and move. Yes, that involves leaving your family, leaving your entire support structure in an ancient world with no insurance or anything. I mean, so this wasn't a light task, but he just needed to move to this land and that act of trust would...

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bring Yahweh to deepen His covenant with Him and to deepen His blessing and use Him to bless the nations. Not to bring this up again, but that stop in Haran, I do think it's interesting that while they were in Haran, they acquired a lot of things it seems like. And so it seems like that, I mean, maybe even the Lord...

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told him to stop there on the way to Canaan. To like, this is where you're gonna...

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start to experience my blessing. I don't know. I actually think the next story is going to speak to that a little bit. Oh, you think so? Yeah, I think so. We'll get there. We'll bring it up. Okay, sounds good. Well, I'll just say in the next story there's also, he becomes a greater multitude with more wealth in rebellion. Yeah, you're right. You're right. So maybe it was he was rebelling. Yeah. We'll get there though. I think it probably maps backwards onto it. Okay.

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So yeah, again, we also see later in Israel's history, they have to remain loyal to Yahweh's covenant to be the blessing to the nations that they're supposed to be. We know that they fail miserably, but, you know, there's this theme throughout the Exodus motif of Yahweh giving covenants and commands which are the basis of a relationship of loyalty between God and His people, which will be the conduit through which Yahweh blesses the nations. And then...

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Sadly, our Exodus motif continues in that Abram has his own rebellion. And it causes his fruitfulness to be frustrated and he is exiled. And that happens whenever he decides to go down to Egypt. Yeah, because he's scared because there's a famine. Which is understandable, but in that moment it would have been better for him to trust that the Lord was going to sustain him through the famine rather than...

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run to, run out of the promised land that he was commanded to go to. Right. Yeah, I think it's easy to sympathize with him given that like, you know, the most high God comes to him and, you know, presumably says, hey, I'm the most high God and I have the power to bless, to make you fruitful, to multiply you, just go to this land, okay, I'll do it. You go there and it's just famine, it's death and hunger and so is God really here? Is he powerful enough to come through on these promises?

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Is he faithful to his word or has he abandoned me? Ultimately, you know God can bring Abram through this famine pretty easily I mean we're told repeatedly in the New Testament like make your needs known to the Lord And so that's that's what he should have done He should have stopped and made his needs know the Lord leaned on the Lord first instead of leaning on Egypt Just like happens later in the Old Testament Israel continued continually relies on Egypt instead of the Lord

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never goes well for them. Right. Well, except in this case, I guess... Kind of sort of. Yeah, kind of sort of. But God still is faithful even in their life and faith. The same thing with, you know, Joseph, his brother, you know, sell him and it works out. It does work out at the end. It always does, but...

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Not without a lot of trials though. I mean, Joseph went through a lot before you get to end the Genesis. I'm looking forward to getting to Joseph because that's just a cool section. But anyway, we start out in all of these exoduses with either the chaotic waters or a violent people and Yahweh comes to see the situation. He divides the enemies, divides the waters. The dry land appears, they come out as a mixed multitude with great possessions.

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They're made into a new humanity. There's these temple connotations, these Edenic connotations attached to the narrative, and they come to Yahweh's mountain. They're rested there. Blessings to be fruitful and multiply, commissions to subdue the land. The elect one is acting as a priest, and they're given commands which need to be adhered to. There's kind of sometimes covenant connotations in that. And then there's a rebellion, exile, frustration of fruitfulness.

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in all these narratives, this narrative patterning. The same story on repeat. Right, yeah, all these elements that go into the Exodus motif found again. We'll pick up with the next story, which is going to be another Exodus next time. We'll go ahead and cut it off here. I know we talked about a lot, and hopefully it didn't feel like drinking from a fire hose. But again, I just want to show where these Exoduses show up in the Genesis narrative and what they're doing. Again, we have.

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someone who is elect being called out of the chaos. And I think in the story, if we're correct, that Abram was called out of Mesopotamia and then stopped and failed and had to be reminded, we already see God's patience at work with the elect one here. He comes in again into this temple-ish land and with the purpose of blessing the nations. That goal is still in play. That's the goal the whole time and is all throughout Genesis.

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but we get to the end of the story and the elect one messes it up again and so the story has to keep continuing. Sounds good. Well, let's pick it up next time. Awesome.