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OUR PERSONAL EXODUS NARRATIVES: LEADERSHIP AND THE ART OF STORYTELLING

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Excerpts from “Re-Telling Exodus” by Ellen Feig

The Exile Narrative

One of the central themes of Exodus is that of external exile, that of people who must leave their home under threat, and travel to another. Literally and physically plagued, Pharaoh is the catalyst for the “long walk” when he agrees to allow the Israelites to follow Moses out of Egypt. The sea parts, the bread is unleavened, and the will of people are tested as they journey to the Promised Land; this is the story that Jews across the world retell every Spring.

The Wilderness Narrative

Once exiled, the Israelites begin their journey to the Promised Land which will become Israel; the exile narrative moves into a wilderness narrative, one where a group must face and overcome the natural elements of the wild. A story of the journey of a group of people from city to parting sea to the desert to home, Palmer notes “Exodus itself focuses on the blessing promise of land.” Moving through the desert, the Israelites transform; they become people chosen to lead; Exodus becomes a “portrait of a people...undergoing transformation in a place outside of normal geographic and cultural boundaries.”

The Redemptive Narrative

Exodus is a book filled with moments of redemption. In a redemptive sequence, an affectively negative or bad life-narrative scene is followed by an affectively positive or good outcome. The good ultimately redeems or salvages the bad that precedes it. The Israelites journeyed for forty years and are redeemed only when they settle in the Holy Land and accept the Ten Commandments, the covenants under which the Jewish people shall live.