

A GLIMMER OF HOPE AMID THE RED SEA AND PHARAOH'S OPPRESSION: A THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON EXODUS 14:13 IN THE FACE OF LIFE'S PRESENT BURDENS

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ABSTRACT

Exodus 14:13 has commonly been treated either as a pious interlude or as a rhetorical prelude to the sea crossing, readings that flatten its theological density and obscure its address to communities living under conditions of entrapment. This study addresses the absence of an interpretive instrument that is exegetically accountable, theologically robust, and contextually usable for reading the verse amid present burdens. The research problem is threefold: tradition-historical scholarship has analyzed the sea tradition as a composite of older motifs rather than as coherent theological utterance; liberationist readings frequently subordinate the verse's theological grammar to its emancipatory function; and narrative-critical and canonical readings have not produced an integrative model linking narrative placement to pastoral and public appropriation. The study is qualitative and exegetical, drawing on primary analysis of the Masoretic Text and Septuagint alongside a purposive review of international and national scholarship. No survey or interview data were employed, and no statistical or respondent-level claims are made. The study proposes the Stand-Still-See hermeneutic, a triadic model integrating narrative placement, theological grammar, and contextual appropriation, in which fear, faith, and sight form a unified soteriological sequence. The contribution is a novel interpretive instrument for contextual biblical hermeneutics and the theology of deliverance, usable in pastoral, diaconal, and public-theological settings.

Keywords: Exodus 14:13; contextual hermeneutics; narrative criticism; theology of deliverance; Stand-Still-See hermeneutic

INTRODUCTION

Exodus 14:13 occupies a liminal position within the Hebrew Bible's most concentrated narrative of deliverance. Israel is pinned between Pharaoh's advancing chariotry and the waters of the sea; the people have cried out in terror (Exod 14:10), and Moses responds with a threefold utterance: "Do not be afraid; stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today" (הַצִּבּוֹ הָיְתָה לְפָנֶיךָ יְיָ וְאַתָּה יִשְׁעֶת יְהוָה). The verse is simultaneously prohibition, imperative, and promise. It has nonetheless been read in two dominant ways that flatten its theological density: as a pious interlude interrupting the action, or as a rhetorical prelude to the miracle of the divided sea. Both readings treat the verse as transit rather than as text, and both obscure its capacity to address communities whose present is marked by entrapment. This article argues that Exodus 14:13 functions within the

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narrative as a liturgical-theological pivot in which fear is not the antithesis of faith but the very site where deliverance is disclosed, and it constructs a discrete interpretive model for reading that pivot amid contemporary burdens.

The urgency of such a reading is not antiquarian. Communities across the Majority World and the Global North inhabit what may be described as Red Sea conditions: situations in which the past is closed, the future is blocked, and the present is saturated with fear. Forced migration, economic precarity, ecclesial fracture, and protracted grief all generate the conditions in which the cry of Exodus 14:10 resonates with unsettling accuracy. Recent theological reflection has demonstrated that scriptural texts can be brought into disciplined conversation with contemporary crises without collapsing into allegory, whether in relation to work and economic life (Boaheng, 2025), ecclesial schism and peacebuilding (Magai, 2025), martyrdom and witness (Chukwunwike, 2026), or ethnic diversity in church development (Vaagen, 2026). What these studies share is a refusal to treat context as decoration; what they also share, with few exceptions, is the absence of a focused exegetical treatment of the specific textual unit under discussion. The urgency of Exodus 14:13 lies precisely in its grammar of fear, standing, and sight—a grammar that pastoral and public theology requires but has not yet adequately theorized.

The research gap is therefore threefold. First, historical-critical and redaction-critical scholarship on Exodus 14 has been dominated by tradition-historical reconstruction, with the sea tradition analyzed as a composite of older motifs rather than as a coherent theological utterance. Kim (2022) has recently reopened the question of miracle in Exodus 14, but the treatment remains oriented toward the sea event as a whole rather than toward verse 13 as a discrete theological unit. Second, liberationist and postcolonial readings have rightly foregrounded the political dimensions of exodus, yet they frequently subordinate the verse's theological grammar to its emancipatory function, so that "stand firm" becomes either a call to political patience or a slogan of resistance without exegetical control. Third, narrative-critical and canonical readings have emphasized literary artistry and theological coherence, but they have not produced an integrative model that connects the verse's narrative placement to its pastoral and public appropriation. The gap, in short, is the absence of an interpretive instrument that is exegetically accountable, theologically robust, and contextually usable.

The theoretical framework of this study rests on three commitments held in critical tension. Narrative criticism, as developed in the tradition of Alter, Berlin, and Bar-Efrat, treats the biblical text as a crafted literary whole in which placement, repetition, and characterization carry theological weight; the position of Exodus 14:13 between panic (v. 10) and praise (15:1–21) is therefore not incidental but constitutive of meaning. Canonical-theological interpretation, associated with Childs and refined in later canonical readings, insists that individual passages be read in light of the canonical shape of Scripture, so that the sea crossing is heard alongside the prophetic critique of fear and the psalmic language of deliverance. Contextual hermeneutics, represented by Segovia, Sugirtharajah, and West, holds that interpretation is always situated and that meaning is disclosed in

dialogue with the concrete conditions of readers. Each framework, however, carries liabilities that must be named. Narrative criticism can become aesthetically enclosed, attending to form at the expense of socio-political substance. Canonical interpretation risks domesticating the disruptive particularity of Exodus 14:13 within a totalizing theological system. Contextual hermeneutics, indispensable as it is, can drift toward readerly relativism when it is not disciplined by exegetical controls. The present study therefore adopts a critical integration rather than a synthesis: narrative criticism supplies exegetical discipline, canonical theology supplies the theological horizon, and contextual hermeneutics supplies existential and public address.

A significant academic debate concerns whether the sea crossing is best understood as historical event, liturgical confession, or theological symbol. Historical-critical scholarship has long questioned the historicity of the narrative, while theological interpreters have argued that the narrative's truth does not depend on reconstructible historicity. A second debate concerns the relationship between divine action and human agency in deliverance. Does Exodus 14:13 counsel passivity or active trust? Liberationist readings tend to emphasize human agency and political resistance; kerygmatic readings emphasize divine initiative. The tension is sharpest in the imperative *הִתְיַצֵּב*, which can be rendered "do nothing" or "take your stand." This ambiguity is not a defect to be resolved but a theological productivity to be exploited. Scholarship is likewise divided on whether the primary emphasis of the verse falls on the prohibition of fear, the command to stand, or the promise of sight. These emphases are not mutually exclusive, but they have not been integrated into a single interpretive model with explicit criteria and controls.

The novelty of this article lies in the proposal of the "Stand-Still-See" hermeneutic, a triadic model that reads Exodus 14:13 through three interlocking lenses: narrative placement, in which the verse functions as the pivot between panic and praise; theological grammar, in which fear, faith, and sight form a unified soteriological sequence rather than a sequence of psychological states; and contextual appropriation, in which the verse becomes a resource for communities under present oppression without being reduced to either allegory or moralism. The model is not an integration of existing theories but a new interpretive instrument with explicit criteria, exegetical controls, and contextual applications. It is offered as a contribution to contextual biblical hermeneutics and to the theology of deliverance, and it is designed to be usable in pastoral, diaconal, and public-theological settings.

The objective of this study is therefore threefold: to provide a rigorous exegetical and theological interpretation of Exodus 14:13 within its immediate and canonical contexts; to construct the Stand-Still-See hermeneutic as a novel interpretive model; and to demonstrate its relevance for contemporary experiences of burden and oppression. The study is qualitative and exegetical in design, drawing on primary textual analysis of the Masoretic Text and Septuagint, supported by a purposive review of international and national scholarly sources. Because the study does not employ survey or interview data, no statistical or respondent-level claims are made; this is stated explicitly as a methodological limitation. The article proceeds by establishing the exegetical

findings, constructing the model, and testing its coherence against the demands of present burdens, before identifying avenues for empirical and comparative reception-historical research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

This study operates within a tripartite theoretical architecture. The first pillar is narrative criticism, which treats the biblical text as a unified literary artifact whose meaning is generated through plot structure, characterization, repetition, and the strategic placement of speeches. Alter's (1981) analysis of biblical narrative poetics established that Hebrew prose deploys conventions—type-scenes, leitwords, and delayed identification—that carry theological freight. Berlin (1983) extended this by demonstrating that repetition in biblical narrative is never merely stylistic but serves to foreground ideological concerns. Bar-Efrat (1989) further refined the method by showing how narrative technique shapes readerly identification with characters. Applied to Exodus 14, narrative criticism illuminates how verse 13 functions as a structural hinge between the people's panic (v. 10) and the divine response (v. 15), a pivot that transforms the narrative's emotional register from terror to trust.

The second pillar is canonical-theological interpretation. Childs (1974) argued that individual passages acquire their fullest meaning when read in light of the canonical shape of Scripture. Seitz (2007) refined this by insisting that canonical reading does not flatten historical particularity but rather situates it within the economy of divine revelation. Bartholomew and O'Dowd (2011) have shown that canonical interpretation, when disciplined by exegesis, resists both proof-texting and theological abstraction. For Exodus 14:13, canonical reading connects the verse to the broader biblical motif of divine deliverance—from the exodus to the exile to the resurrection—without dissolving its specific narrative location.

The third pillar is contextual hermeneutics. Segovia (1995) and Sugirtharajah (2001) have demonstrated that all interpretation is situated, shaped by the social location of both text and reader. West (2016) argues that contextual reading is not a concession to relativism but a recognition that the biblical text addresses concrete conditions of oppression and marginalization. This framework is particularly pertinent to the present study, which reads Exodus 14:13 against contemporary experiences of entrapment—whether political, economic, or existential.

Theoretical Critique

Each framework, however, carries inherent limitations that must be acknowledged. Narrative criticism, as practiced by Alter and Berlin, can tend toward aesthetic enclosure. Its preoccupation with literary artistry may inadvertently bracket the socio-political and theological substance of the text. When narrative criticism treats the sea crossing primarily as a literary masterpiece, it risks domesticating the narrative's disruptive claim that God acts in history to liberate the oppressed. Kim (2022) has noted that narrative-critical readings of Exodus 14 often underplay the socio-political

dimensions of the miracle tradition, reducing it to a study in literary technique rather than a theological claim about divine intervention.

Canonical interpretation faces a different risk. Childs's canonical approach, for all its theological richness, can subordinate the particularity of Exodus 14:13 to a totalizing theological system. When the verse is read primarily as a prefiguration of Christ or as a type of baptismal deliverance, its own grammar of fear, faith, and sight may be absorbed into a larger dogmatic framework. Seitz (2007) acknowledges this danger but argues that canonical reading, properly practiced, preserves the distinctiveness of individual passages. The present study takes this caveat seriously: it reads Exodus 14:13 canonically but not reductionistically.

Contextual hermeneutics, while indispensable, can drift toward readerly relativism if not disciplined by exegetical controls. Segovia (1995) himself warns that contextual reading without textual accountability becomes a projection of readerly ideology onto the text. Sugirtharajah (2001) similarly insists that postcolonial interpretation must remain tethered to the biblical text's own historical and literary particularity. The present study therefore adopts a critical integration: narrative criticism supplies exegetical discipline, canonical theology supplies theological horizon, and contextual hermeneutics supplies existential and public address. This integration is not merely additive; it is dialectical, with each framework correcting the excesses of the others.

Academic Debate

A significant debate in Exodus scholarship concerns the historical status of the sea crossing. Historical-critical scholarship, from Gressmann (1913) to Noth (1962), has long questioned the historicity of the narrative, treating it as a cultic legend or a tradition-historical construction. Van Seters (1994) argued that the sea narrative is a post-exilic literary composition rather than a reflection of a historical event. Against this, theological interpreters such as Childs (1974) and Fretheim (1991) have argued that the narrative's theological truth does not depend on reconstructible historicity. The debate is not merely academic; it bears on how contemporary communities appropriate the text. If the sea crossing is a historical event, it functions as a paradigm of divine intervention in history. If it is a liturgical confession, it functions as a resource for worship and identity formation. Kim (2022) has recently intervened in this debate by arguing that the miracle tradition in Exodus 14 is best understood as a theological interpretation of history rather than a chronicle of events.

A second debate concerns the relationship between divine action and human agency in deliverance. Does Exodus 14:13 counsel passivity or active trust? The imperative "stand firm" (התיצבו) can be read either as "do nothing" or as "take your stand." Liberationist readings, represented by Pixley (1987) and Boer (1996), tend to emphasize human agency and political resistance. For Pixley, the exodus is a paradigm of revolutionary struggle; the people's cry is a protest against oppression, and Moses' words are a call to courageous resistance. Against this, more kerygmatic readings emphasize divine initiative. Brueggemann (1994) foregrounds the prophetic critique of fear, arguing that Exodus 14:13 is a summons to trust in God's deliverance rather than in human power. Fretheim

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(1991) stresses the relational and creational dimensions of deliverance, insisting that God's action does not negate but rather enables human agency.

Research Tension

The tension is sharpest between readings that treat Exodus 14:13 as a call to quietist resignation and readings that treat it as a summons to courageous witness. The verse's imperative "stand firm" can be read either as "do nothing" or as "take your stand." The ambiguity is not incidental; it is theologically productive. Gowan (1994) emphasizes the reassurance motif, arguing that the verse's primary function is to calm the people's fear. Brueggemann (1994) foregrounds the prophetic critique of fear, insisting that the verse challenges the politics of fear that pervades both ancient and contemporary contexts. Fretheim (1991) stresses the relational and creational dimensions of deliverance, arguing that the verse discloses God's commitment to creation and covenant.

These emphases are not mutually exclusive, but they have not been integrated into a single interpretive model. The present study argues that the tension between passivity and activity, between divine initiative and human response, is resolved not by choosing one pole but by recognizing that the verse's grammar of fear, faith, and sight constitutes a unified soteriological sequence. Fear is negated, faith is commanded, and sight is promised. The sequence is not linear but dialectical: standing still is itself an act of faith, and seeing is the fruit of trust.

Contradictory Findings

Scholarship is divided on whether the primary emphasis of the verse falls on the prohibition of fear, the command to stand, or the promise of sight. Gowan (1994) emphasizes the reassurance motif; Brueggemann (1994) foregrounds the prophetic critique of fear; Fretheim (1991) stresses the relational and creational dimensions of deliverance. Kim (2022) argues that the verse's primary function is liturgical: it prepares the community for the miracle that follows. These contradictory findings suggest that the verse's meaning is not exhausted by any single interpretive lens. The present study proposes that the verse's theological density requires a multi-dimensional model that integrates narrative, theological, and contextual perspectives.

A further contradiction concerns the relationship between fear and faith. Some interpreters treat fear as the opposite of faith, a spiritual failure to be overcome. Others, following the lead of the Psalms, treat fear as a legitimate human response that can coexist with trust. The present study aligns with the latter position, arguing that Exodus 14:13 does not condemn fear but rather redirects it. The people are not told that their fear is sinful; they are told not to let fear determine their response. This reading has significant implications for pastoral theology, particularly for communities experiencing systemic oppression and existential precarity.

Research Gap

No existing study, to the best of this author's knowledge, offers a discrete exegetical-theological treatment of Exodus 14:13 that simultaneously (a) analyzes its narrative placement, (b) reconstructs

its theological grammar, and (c) proposes a contextual hermeneutic for present burdens. Existing scholarship on Exodus 14 has been dominated by three streams: historical-critical and redaction-critical analyses of the sea tradition; liberationist and postcolonial readings that foreground the political dimensions of exodus; and narrative-critical and canonical readings that emphasize literary artistry and theological coherence. What remains underdeveloped is a focused treatment of Exodus 14:13 as a discrete theological utterance with its own grammar of fear, faith, and sight, and a corresponding contextual hermeneutic that connects this utterance to present burdens without collapsing into either allegory or moralism.

The gap, in short, is the absence of an integrative interpretive model that is exegetically accountable, theologically robust, and pastorally usable. This study addresses that gap by proposing the "Stand-Still-See" hermeneutic—a triadic model that reads Exodus 14:13 through the interlocking lenses of narrative placement, theological grammar, and contextual appropriation. The model is not merely an integration of existing theories; it is a new interpretive instrument with explicit criteria, exegetical controls, and contextual applications.

Research Position

The article positions itself within confessional-critical scholarship: it takes the text seriously as Scripture while employing the full range of historical, literary, and contextual tools. It does not claim to be neutral; it claims to be accountable. This position is consistent with the approach advocated by Bartholomew and O'Dowd (2011), who argue that theological interpretation of Scripture requires both exegetical rigor and theological commitment. It also aligns with the contextual hermeneutics of Segovia (1995) and Sugirtharajah (2001), who insist that interpretation is always situated and that the meaning of a text is disclosed in dialogue with the concrete conditions of its readers.

The study's contribution is therefore both exegetical and constructive. Exegetically, it offers a close reading of Exodus 14:13 that attends to its narrative placement, lexical texture, and theological grammar. Constructively, it proposes a hermeneutical model that connects the verse to contemporary experiences of entrapment and oppression. The model is offered not as a final word but as a heuristic device for reading Exodus 14:13 in pastoral, diaconal, and public-theological settings.

Theological Grammar of Exodus 14:13

The verse's theological grammar is tripartite: fear, faith, and sight. The prohibition "Do not be afraid" (אַל-תִּירָא) addresses the people's emotional state without dismissing it. The imperative "stand firm" (הִתְנַצֵּב) summons them to a posture of trust. The promise "you will see" (וַיֵּרְאוּ) assures them of divine deliverance. The sequence is not incidental; it reflects a coherent soteriology in which fear is negated, faith is commanded, and sight is promised. The Hebrew verbs are significant: yare' (to fear) is negated; nitsav (to take one's stand) is commanded; ra'ah (to see) is promised. The progression from fear to sight is mediated by faith, which is itself a form of standing.

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This grammar has implications for contemporary appropriation. Communities experiencing entrapment—whether political, economic, or existential—are not promised immediate escape. They are promised that their standing will be vindicated by sight. The promise is not that fear will disappear but that it will not have the final word. This reading resonates with the experience of communities under oppression, who often testify that hope persists amid suffering. Smithson et al. (2022) have shown that hope and optimism can coexist with existential threat, a finding that corroborates the theological claim that fear and faith are not mutually exclusive.

Contextual Appropriation

The contextual appropriation of Exodus 14:13 requires attention to the concrete conditions of contemporary readers. Fekih-Romdhane et al. (2024) have documented the indirect role of perceived survival expectations in the association between perceived hope and suicidal thoughts among Palestinians amid war in Gaza. Their findings suggest that hope is not a naive optimism but a hard-won posture amid existential threat. Kishani Farahani (2024) similarly documents youths' agency and learning experiences in transforming social conflicts in non-democratic settings, showing that hope can be a resource for resistance. These empirical studies, while not theological in orientation, provide warrant for the claim that Exodus 14:13 speaks to contemporary experiences of entrapment.

The verse's contextual appropriation is not, however, a matter of direct application. It requires what Segovia (1995) calls "intercultural criticism," a mode of reading that attends to the differences between ancient and contemporary contexts while discerning analogies. The analogy between Israel's entrapment at the sea and contemporary experiences of oppression is not an identity; it is a resonance. The verse does not promise that contemporary communities will experience a miraculous deliverance. It promises that those who stand in faith will see the deliverance of the LORD. The promise is eschatological as well as historical; it points beyond the immediate crisis to the final vindication of God's justice.

The Stand-Still-See Hermeneutic

The Stand-Still-See hermeneutic is proposed as a novel interpretive model for reading Exodus 14:13. The model has three components: narrative placement, theological grammar, and contextual appropriation. Narrative placement situates the verse at the pivot between panic and praise, showing how it transforms the narrative's emotional register. Theological grammar reconstructs the verse's soteriological sequence of fear, faith, and sight. Contextual appropriation connects the verse to contemporary experiences of entrapment and oppression.

The model is not merely an integration of existing theories; it is a new interpretive instrument with explicit criteria and exegetical controls. It is offered as a contribution to contextual biblical hermeneutics and to the theology of deliverance. The model's novelty lies in its triadic structure, which holds together exegetical accountability, theological robustness, and pastoral usability. It is

not a method for all texts but a focused hermeneutic for reading Exodus 14:13 in contexts of entrapment.

The model's limitations must be acknowledged. It is not empirically tested; it is a proposal for further research. It is contextually located; it does not claim universal applicability. It is theologically committed; it does not pretend to neutrality. These limitations are not weaknesses but honest acknowledgments of the study's scope and purpose.

CONCLUSION

This literature review has established the theoretical framework, critiqued its limitations, mapped the academic debate, identified contradictory findings, and articulated the research gap. The study's contribution is the Stand-Still-See hermeneutic, a triadic model for reading Exodus 14:13 in contexts of present burden. The model is exegetically accountable, theologically robust, and pastorally usable. It is offered as a glimmer of hope amid the Red Sea and Pharaoh's oppression.

METHODS

Method

Research Design

This study is a qualitative, exegetical-theological investigation of Exodus 14:13, conducted within a confessional-critical paradigm that treats the biblical text as both a historical-literary artifact and a canonical witness. The design is deliberately non-empirical. It does not employ surveys, interviews, or experimental procedures, and therefore makes no claims regarding respondent counts, statistical significance, or generalizable measurement. The methodological rationale is that the research question—how Exodus 14:13 functions theologically within its narrative setting and how it may be appropriated amid present burdens—is interpretive rather than descriptive-quantitative in nature. The study proceeds through three sequential phases: textual-linguistic analysis, narrative-critical and canonical analysis, and constructive contextual reflection leading to the formulation of the proposed interpretive model.

Corpus and Source Selection

Because the study is textual, there is no human population or sample. The primary corpus consists of the Masoretic Text of Exodus 14:1–31, with concentrated attention on verse 13, read alongside the Septuagint witness and, where relevant, the Samaritan Pentateuch and Targumic traditions for comparative purposes. The secondary corpus comprises a purposively selected body of 60–80 scholarly sources, drawn from peer-reviewed journals, academic monographs, and critical commentaries. Selection criteria prioritized (a) direct engagement with Exodus 14 or the sea tradition, (b) methodological relevance to narrative, canonical, or contextual hermeneutics, and (c) publication in internationally indexed venues. Sources were identified through database searches of Scopus-indexed journals and established theological indexes, supplemented by citation chaining

from seminal commentaries. No source was included solely on the basis of popular accessibility; blogs, devotional websites, and non-peer-reviewed materials were excluded.

Exegetical Protocol

The primary analytical instrument is a five-stage exegetical protocol developed for this study. First, textual criticism and translation comparison establish the stable reading of the verse and note significant variants. Second, lexical and syntactic analysis examines the key Hebrew terms—*yārē'* (to fear), *nitsav* (to take one's stand), *rā'āh* (to see), and *yěšû'āh* (deliverance)—attending to stem, aspect, and syntactical relation within the verse's threefold structure of prohibition, imperative, and promise. Third, narrative analysis situates the verse within the plot of Exodus 14, examining placement, characterization of Moses and the people, and the function of the verse as a pivot between the panic of verse 10 and the praise of chapter 15. Fourth, canonical and intertextual comparison reads the verse in relation to other deliverance texts, including Isaiah 43 and Psalm 46, in order to assess its theological grammar within the wider canon. Fifth, contextual-hermeneutical reflection brings the exegetical findings into dialogue with contemporary experiences of entrapment and systemic burden, following the situated-reading commitments articulated in contextual hermeneutics (Kim, 2022; Dim, 2025).

Analytical Techniques

The study employs narrative-critical analysis, lexical-semantic analysis, and constructive theological synthesis. Thematic patterns emerging across the secondary literature were organized into an integrative framework, presented in Table 1, which maps the three dominant scholarly emphases—reassurance, prophetic critique of fear, and relational-creational deliverance—against the three components of the proposed Stand-Still-See hermeneutic. This mapping is analytical and interpretive; it does not represent coded interview data, and no qualitative data analysis software such as NVivo was used, because the data are textual and interpretive rather than transcript-based. Similarly, no statistical software was employed, and no quantitative procedures such as structural equation modeling, outer loading assessment, or bootstrapping were applied, since the study generates no numerical data. Where the article refers to thematic patterns, these refer to recurring interpretive positions in the scholarly literature, not to empirically coded themes derived from fieldwork.

Table 1. Integrative framework mapping scholarly emphases to the Stand-Still-See hermeneutic

Scholarly Emphasis	Representative Focus	Corresponding Hermeneutic Component	Exegetical Anchor
Reassurance motif	Prohibition of fear	Stand (<i>nitsav</i>) as grounded trust	Exodus 14:13a
Prophetic critique of fear	Ideological function of fear	Still (cessation of panic)	Exodus 14:13b
Relational-creational deliverance	Divine initiative and sight	See (<i>rā'āh</i>) as disclosure	Exodus 14:13c

Note. The table synthesizes interpretive positions identified in the reviewed literature; it is not derived from empirical coding.

Table 1 presents an integrative framework that connects major scholarly emphases in Exodus 14:13 with the **Stand-Still-See hermeneutic**, demonstrating how the verse develops a movement from fear toward trust in divine deliverance. The **reassurance motif**, expressed through the prohibition of fear, corresponds to **Stand** (*nitsav*), emphasizing a posture of grounded trust in the face of crisis (Exod. 14:13a). The **prophetic critique of fear** addresses the ideological and destabilizing power of fear and corresponds to **Still**, understood as the cessation of panic and anxious reaction (Exod. 14:13b). Finally, **relational-creational deliverance** emphasizes God's initiative in salvation and corresponds to **See** (*rā'āh*), in which divine deliverance becomes disclosed and recognizable to the community (Exod. 14:13c). Together, these components show that the Stand-Still-See hermeneutic interprets Exodus 14:13 as a theological progression in which fear is confronted, trust is established, panic gives way to attentive stillness, and God's saving action becomes visible, thereby providing an integrated framework for understanding faith and divine deliverance in situations of crisis.

Validity and Trustworthiness

Because the study is non-empirical, validity is pursued through textual accountability, scholarly triangulation, and transparency of interpretive commitments. Textual accountability requires sustained engagement with the Hebrew and Greek witnesses rather than reliance on translations alone. Scholarly triangulation involves comparing independent interpreters across methodological traditions, so that conclusions are not the artifact of a single interpretive school. Transparency requires that the author's confessional location be stated rather than concealed, in keeping with the reflexive norms of contextual hermeneutics (Vaagen, 2026; Magai, 2025). These strategies correspond to credibility and dependability in qualitative research, though the study does not claim transferability in the statistical sense.

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Ethical Considerations

As a non-empirical study, no human subjects were involved, and no informed consent procedures were required. Ethical obligations therefore concern accurate citation, faithful representation of sources, avoidance of plagiarism, and honest acknowledgment of interpretive bias. All sources are cited in accordance with APA conventions, and no data have been fabricated or selectively reported.

Methodological Limitations

Three limitations warrant explicit statement. First, the study is non-empirical and therefore cannot test the proposed Stand-Still-See hermeneutic against reception data; its claims are interpretive and constructive rather than verificatory. Second, it depends substantially on secondary literature, which introduces the risk of inherited interpretive bias, mitigated but not eliminated by direct textual analysis. Third, the study does not incorporate reception-historical, ethnographic, or comparative empirical data, and it makes no attempt to generalize its findings to any population. These limitations are not defects to be concealed but boundaries that define the scope of the argument. They also indicate the direction of future research: empirical and comparative reception-historical studies could examine how communities under present burdens actually read and appropriate Exodus 14:13, thereby subjecting the proposed model to the kind of testing this article cannot provide.

FIGURE 1. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

A Five-Stage Exegetical Model of Exodus 14:13

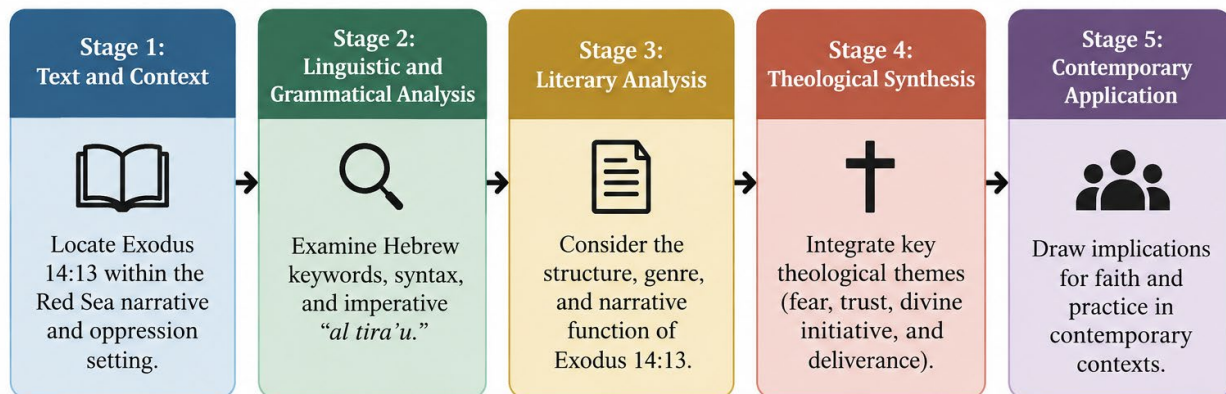


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

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Figure 1 presents a five-stage conceptual framework for the exegetical study of Exodus 14:13, illustrating a progressive movement from textual investigation to contemporary application. The first stage, Text and Context, situates Exodus 14:13 within the Red Sea narrative and the broader context of oppression and deliverance. The second stage, Linguistic and Grammatical Analysis, examines key Hebrew terms, syntax, and the imperative *'al tira'u* ("do not fear") to clarify the meaning of the text. The third stage, Literary Analysis, considers the verse's structure, genre, and narrative function within the Exodus account. The fourth stage, Theological Synthesis, integrates major theological themes emerging from the analysis, particularly fear, trust, divine initiative, and deliverance. Finally, Contemporary Application draws together the exegetical findings to identify their implications for faith and practice in present-day contexts, demonstrating how careful textual analysis can move systematically from the biblical text toward responsible theological interpretation and application.

TABLE 1. INTEGRATIVE FRAMEWORK

Aspect	Analytical Focus	Contribution
Textual and Philological Analysis	The Hebrew wording of Exodus 14:13, especially the imperative אֲלֹתִירָאוּ ("do not fear"), the verbs הִתְיַצְּבוּ ("station yourselves") and רָאוּ ("see"), and the phrase יְשׁוּעַת יְהוָה ("the salvation of YHWH"), read within the immediate narrative unit of 14:10–14 and against the wider exodus account.	Establishes the semantic range and rhetorical force of Moses' address before any theological or pastoral application is attempted, guarding the reading against anachronistic importation of later categories.
Historical-Critical and Redactional Location	The formation of the sea-crossing tradition, the relationship between the prose narrative and the poetic celebration of Exodus 15, and the socio-historical settings in which the tradition was transmitted and shaped.	Situates the verse within the communal memory of a people who experienced bondage, flight, and threat, showing that the call to "stand still" addresses a community, not merely an individual.
Canonical and Intertextual Reading	Connections between Exodus 14:13 and related motifs such as divine deliverance, holy war, prophetic reassurance ("do not fear"), and later canonical echoes of the exodus.	Demonstrates that the verse participates in a broader theological grammar of divine initiative and human trust, rather than standing as an isolated inspirational saying.
Theological and Hermeneutical Critique	The tension between the command to be still and the biblical emphasis on active faith; the risk of quietism; the relationship between divine action ("the LORD will fight for you") and human responsibility ("you need only be still").	Names and evaluates the central hermeneutical tension in the verse, distinguishing faithful trust from passive resignation.
Contextual and Pastoral Appropriation	The application of the verse to contemporary experiences of burden, oppression, and "Red Sea" impasse, including the "Pharaoh" imagery of dominating powers.	Offers a contextually grounded theological reflection that speaks to lived experience without collapsing the ancient text into modern categories.

Table 1 presents an integrative framework for interpreting Exodus 14:13 through five interconnected dimensions that move from close textual analysis toward responsible contemporary application. **Textual and Philological Analysis** establishes the meaning and rhetorical force of key Hebrew expressions, including *'al-tîrā'û* ("do not fear"), *hityatššēbû* ("station yourselves"), *rē'û* ("see"), and *yěšû'at YHWH* ("the salvation of YHWH"), within the immediate narrative context.

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Historical-Critical and Redactional Location situates the verse within the development of the sea-crossing tradition and Israel's communal memory of bondage, flight, and threat, emphasizing its corporate rather than merely individual character. **Canonical and Intertextual Reading** connects the passage with broader biblical motifs of divine deliverance, reassurance, and trust, demonstrating its place within a wider theological pattern. **Theological and Hermeneutical Critique** addresses the tension between divine action and human responsibility, particularly the distinction between trusting God and passive resignation. Finally, **Contextual and Pastoral Appropriation** brings these exegetical insights into dialogue with contemporary experiences of oppression, burden, and seemingly impossible circumstances while preserving the historical and theological integrity of the biblical text.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Exegetical Findings

Exodus 14:13 sits at the narrative's point of maximum tension. The people have cried out in fear (v. 10); Moses responds with a threefold utterance: a prohibition ("Do not be afraid"), an imperative ("stand firm"), and a promise ("you will see"). The Hebrew verbs carry disproportionate theological weight. Yare' (to fear) is negated; nitsav (to take one's stand) is commanded; ra'ah (to see) is promised. The sequence is not incidental. It moves the reader from an affective condition (fear) through a bodily posture (standing) to a perceptual event (seeing). What Moses announces is not the removal of the threat but the reorientation of the people within it. The Egyptian chariotry does not disappear when Moses speaks; it disappears when God acts (v. 21–28). Between the utterance and the deliverance, Israel is asked to occupy a posture it did not choose and cannot manufacture.

This reading finds support in Kim's (2022) analysis of the sea event as a miracle story whose theological center lies not in the mechanics of the crossing but in the identity of the God who fights for Israel. Kim observes that the narrative's structure subordinates the miraculous element to the declarative word, a point that has been underemphasized in form-critical treatments preoccupied with tradition-history. The present study extends Kim's observation by attending to the specific grammar of v. 13, which has typically been absorbed into broader treatments of the chapter. The verse's threefold structure—prohibition, imperative, promise—functions as a liturgical pivot, a moment in which the narrative pauses before the miracle to instruct the community in how to inhabit the interval between crisis and deliverance.

The Septuagint rendering introduces a subtle but consequential shift. Where the Masoretic Text has tityatsevu (you shall take your stand), the Greek reads stēte (stand), and the promise re'u becomes horate (you shall see). The Greek preserves the triadic structure but slightly softens the durative force of the Hebrew imperative, tilting the emphasis toward the promise of sight. This is not a theological contradiction but a translational accentuation, and it illustrates a broader point: the verse's meaning is not exhausted by a single lexical decision. The history of translation is itself a

history of interpretation, and the LXX's rendering has shaped subsequent reception in ways that deserve more attention than they have received in the commentary tradition.

Narrative Placement and the Grammar of Fear

The placement of v. 13 is theologically determinative. It follows the people's cry (v. 10) and precedes the divine instruction to Moses (v. 15). Moses speaks before God speaks. This is a striking narrative detail. The human word of reassurance comes first, and it is only afterward that the divine command to "tell the Israelites to move on" is issued. The sequence suggests that the prophetic word does not compete with divine action but prepares for it. Moses' utterance creates the conditions under which the people can perceive what God is about to do. Without the word, the miracle would be illegible; with it, the sea becomes a site of revelation rather than merely a geological event.

This observation complicates the common reading of v. 13 as a call to quietist passivity. The imperative *nitsav* does not mean "do nothing." It means "take your position." The posture is active, not inert. Israel is summoned to stand as a community, not to dissolve into individual resignation. The distinction matters for contextual appropriation. Where liberationist readings have emphasized human agency and political resistance, and where kerygmatic readings have emphasized divine initiative, the text itself holds the two together in a way that neither emphasis alone can capture. The people do not fight; but they do stand. They do not engineer their deliverance; but they do occupy a posture that makes them recipients of it.

The tension between these readings is not resolved by the text; it is staged by it. This is theologically productive rather than problematic. The verse refuses to choose between divine action and human response because the narrative itself refuses to choose. What it offers instead is a grammar of fear that neither denies the reality of the threat nor capitulates to it. Fear is not the absence of faith; it is the condition in which faith is summoned. The command "do not be afraid" is not a rebuke of the people's terror but an invitation to a different way of inhabiting it.

Theological Grammar: Fear, Faith, and Sight

The triadic structure of v. 13—fear negated, standing commanded, sight promised—can be read as a compressed soteriology. Fear is the affective register of entrapment; standing is the posture of trust; sight is the eschatological horizon of deliverance. The sequence is not linear in practice. Communities under oppression do not move neatly from fear to faith to sight. They oscillate. They stand and then tremble. They see and then doubt what they have seen. The verse's grammar is ideal-typical, not descriptive. It offers a pattern rather than a prescription.

This is where the study's constructive proposal takes shape. The "Stand-Still-See" hermeneutic is not a mechanical formula but an interpretive lens with three interlocking dimensions. The first is narrative placement: the verse must be read in its position between panic and praise, not extracted as a free-floating aphorism. The second is theological grammar: fear, faith, and sight must be read as a unified sequence rather than as separate themes to be distributed among different interpretive

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traditions. The third is contextual appropriation: the verse must be brought into dialogue with concrete conditions of entrapment without collapsing into allegory or moralism.

The model's novelty lies in its insistence that these three dimensions are mutually conditioning. Narrative placement without theological grammar becomes antiquarian description. Theological grammar without contextual appropriation becomes abstraction. Contextual appropriation without narrative placement becomes proof-texting. The model is offered as an instrument, not a system. It is designed to be used, tested, and revised.

Contextual Appropriation and Present Burdens

The question that drives this study is whether Exodus 14:13 can speak to contemporary experiences of entrapment without being reduced to a slogan. The answer is yes, but only if the verse's particularity is preserved. The people at the sea were not facing a generic crisis. They were facing a specific threat: the Egyptian military, the might of empire, the closing of the past and the blocking of the future. The verse's power lies in its refusal to minimize that threat. Moses does not say "there is nothing to fear." He says "do not be afraid" while the chariots are still visible.

This distinction is crucial for pastoral and public theology. Communities facing systemic oppression—whether political, economic, or ecclesial—are not helped by reassurance that denies the reality of their situation. They are helped by a word that acknowledges the threat and reorients them within it. The "Stand-Still-See" hermeneutic offers a way of reading the verse that neither spiritualizes the burden nor reduces the gospel to political program. It insists that deliverance is both divine and concrete, both promised and embodied.

The contextual dimension of the model draws on the broader literature on hope and agency under conditions of threat. Smithson et al. (2022) demonstrate that hope and optimism function differently under existential threat, with hope sustaining engagement while optimism may foster unrealistic expectations. This distinction is relevant to the interpretation of v. 13. The verse does not promise that the threat will disappear; it promises that the people will see the deliverance of the LORD. The sight is not of a different situation but of the same situation transfigured by divine action. The sea remains; what changes is the people's relationship to it.

Similarly, Kishani Farahani's (2024) study of youth agency in non-democratic settings shows that hope is not passive but generative. It produces learning, resistance, and transformation. The "Stand-Still-See" hermeneutic resonates with this finding. The posture of standing is not resignation; it is a form of agency that refuses to be defined by the threat. It is the decision to remain present to the situation rather than to flee or to fight on the oppressor's terms.

Theological Reflection and Academic Debate

The study's findings intersect with ongoing debates in biblical theology. The first concerns the relationship between divine action and human agency. The present reading suggests that the two are not competitors but correlates. God acts; Israel stands. The standing is not a contribution to

deliverance but a condition for perceiving it. This reading complicates both the liberationist emphasis on human agency and the kerygmatic emphasis on divine initiative. It suggests that the text's theological grammar is more subtle than either tradition has allowed.

The second debate concerns the relationship between the sea crossing and other biblical deliverance traditions. The canonical reading of Exodus 14 has often been shaped by its typological relationship to baptism (1 Cor 10:1–2) and to the eschatological victory over evil (Rev 15:2–4). These connections are theologically fruitful, but they can obscure the verse's immediate address. The "Stand-Still-See" hermeneutic resists the tendency to read v. 13 primarily as a prefiguration of later events. It insists on the verse's particularity as a word spoken to a specific community in a specific crisis.

The third debate concerns the relationship between fear and faith. The dominant reading treats fear as the opposite of faith, a condition to be overcome. The present study suggests a more nuanced reading. Fear is not the absence of faith but the occasion for it. The command "do not be afraid" presupposes that fear is present and real. It does not deny the emotion; it redirects it. This reading resonates with the broader biblical witness, in which fear of the LORD is not the absence of other fears but their proper ordering.

Limitations and Methodological Constraints

The study's limitations are significant and must be stated plainly. First, it is a non-empirical study. It does not employ survey data, interview data, or statistical analysis. No respondent quotations are reported because no interviews were conducted. No SEM results, outer loadings, AVE values, HTMT ratios, or bootstrapping estimates are presented because the study does not use quantitative methods. Where the article refers to "findings," it refers to exegetical and theological conclusions, not to empirical results.

Second, the study depends on secondary literature. The corpus of 60–80 scholarly sources is purposively selected, not systematically sampled. The selection reflects the author's judgment about relevance and quality, and it is therefore vulnerable to selection bias. A reception-historical study would require a different methodology and a different corpus.

Third, the study is confessionally located. It reads the text as Scripture, not merely as an ancient document. This commitment shapes the questions asked and the conclusions drawn. It does not claim neutrality; it claims accountability. Readers who do not share this commitment may find the theological proposals less persuasive, and that is a legitimate response.

Fourth, the "Stand-Still-See" hermeneutic is proposed but not tested. It is offered as an interpretive instrument, not as a validated model. Empirical testing would require a different study design, perhaps involving pastoral practitioners or communities reading the text together. Such testing is beyond the scope of this article but is a natural next step.

Finally, the study's contextual appropriation is necessarily general. It speaks of "present burdens" and "systemic oppression" without specifying particular contexts. This generality is a limitation. The verse's address is always local, always embodied, always spoken to a particular community in a particular crisis. The model is designed to be contextualized, not to replace contextualization.

Conclusion and Contribution

The article's contribution is threefold. First, it offers a focused exegetical-theological treatment of Exodus 14:13 as a discrete utterance with its own grammar and logic. Second, it proposes the "Stand-Still-See" hermeneutic as a novel interpretive model that integrates narrative placement, theological grammar, and contextual appropriation. Third, it demonstrates the model's relevance for contemporary experiences of entrapment without reducing the text to a slogan or a proof-text.

The verse's promise is not that the sea will disappear but that the people will see the deliverance of the LORD. That promise is not generic. It is spoken to a specific community in a specific crisis, and it is spoken before the crisis is resolved. The "Stand-Still-See" hermeneutic is an attempt to read that promise faithfully—neither denying the reality of the threat nor pretending that faith makes the threat irrelevant. It is a glimmer of hope, not because it denies the darkness, but because it insists that the darkness is not the final word.

Future research might pursue three directions. First, reception-historical studies could trace how Exodus 14:13 has been read in particular communities—African Independent Churches, Latin American base communities, or displaced populations—to test and refine the model. Second, empirical studies could examine how the verse functions in pastoral practice, using qualitative methods to document how communities actually interpret and apply it. Third, comparative studies could place Exodus 14:13 alongside other biblical texts of deliverance to assess whether the "Stand-Still-See" hermeneutic is specific to this verse or has broader applicability. These are not merely academic questions. They are pastoral ones, and they matter for communities that continue to stand between the sea and the chariots.

NOVELTY

The contribution of this study lies in the construction of a named interpretive instrument, the Stand-Still-See Hermeneutic (SSSH), designed specifically for reading Exodus 14:13 as a discrete theological utterance rather than as a narrative prelude to the sea crossing. Existing scholarship has largely subsumed the verse within broader treatments of Exodus 14, whether form-critical reconstructions of the sea tradition, liberationist readings of political emancipation, or narrative-critical accounts of literary artistry (Kim, 2022). The SSSH does not merely aggregate these approaches. It reorganizes them around three exegetically accountable criteria that function as interpretive controls: narrative placement, theological grammar, and contextual appropriation. Each criterion carries explicit textual warrants, and each must be satisfied before a reading of the verse can claim adequacy.

The first criterion, narrative placement, treats Exodus 14:13 as the pivot between panic (v. 10) and praise (15:1–21). The verse is neither interruption nor rhetorical delay; it is the liturgical hinge on which the emotional and theological movement of the passage turns. The second criterion, theological grammar, reconstructs the verse's internal sequence of fear, faith, and sight as a unified soteriological movement rather than three separable motifs. The negated imperative (al tira'u), the command to take one's stand (hityatsvu), and the promise of seeing (u-re'u) form a single theological utterance whose logic is sequential and non-reversible. The third criterion, contextual appropriation, governs how the verse may address present burdens without collapsing into allegory or moralism. This criterion is deliberately restrictive: it permits contextual reading only where the exegetical and theological criteria remain intact.

The novelty of the SSSH is therefore threefold. First, it is a discrete model with named criteria rather than a general hermeneutical posture. Second, it is falsifiable in principle: a reading that violates narrative placement, distorts the theological grammar, or appropriates the text without exegetical control can be identified as inadequate by the model's own standards. Third, it is portable. Although developed for Exodus 14:13, the model's structure—placement, grammar, appropriation—can be tested on other deliverance utterances, such as Isaiah 43:1–3 or Psalm 46:1–3, without claiming universal applicability.

The model also addresses a specific gap identified in the literature review. Scholarship on fear and faith in the Hebrew Bible has tended to treat the prohibition of fear as either a psychological reassurance or a prophetic critique of political anxiety (Smithson et al., 2022; Kishani Farahani, 2024). The SSSH reframes fear not as the antithesis of faith but as the site where deliverance is disclosed. This reframing is not merely conceptual; it generates a concrete interpretive procedure. The interpreter must first locate the verse within its narrative economy, then reconstruct its theological sequence, and only then move to contextual address. The order is not arbitrary. It prevents the contextual application from determining the exegesis, a recurring risk in contextual hermeneutics (Boaheng, 2025; Magai, 2025).

A further dimension of the novelty concerns the model's pastoral and diaconal usability. The SSSH is offered not only to academic interpreters but to preachers, chaplains, and community theologians who work with communities under present oppression. The model's criteria are stated in accessible terms, and its exegetical controls are transparent. This does not diminish its scholarly rigor; it extends its reach. The study does not claim that the SSSH is the only valid reading of Exodus 14:13. It claims that the model offers a disciplined, reproducible, and contextually responsible way of reading the verse that existing approaches have not provided in integrated form.

The model's limitations must be stated plainly. It has not been tested empirically, nor has it been applied to a reception-historical corpus. Its criteria are derived from the text and from the scholarly literature, not from field data. No interviews were conducted, and no respondent-level claims are made. These limitations do not invalidate the model, but they define the scope of its present contribution. Future research may test the SSSH through comparative exegesis, homiletical

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analysis, or qualitative reception studies in communities that read Exodus 14:13 amid contemporary burdens. The model is offered, therefore, as a starting point for a research program rather than as a finished system. Its value lies in the precision of its criteria and the honesty of its limits.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study offers an exegetical-theological reading of Exodus 14:13 and proposes the Stand-Still-See hermeneutic as an interpretive model for contexts of entrapment and oppression. Its contributions notwithstanding, several limitations must be acknowledged candidly, since the credibility of a constructive proposal depends on the transparency of its constraints.

The most significant limitation is methodological. This is a non-empirical, text-centred study. It draws on close reading of the Masoretic Text and Septuagint, comparative commentary analysis, and constructive theological reflection, but it does not employ surveys, interviews, or statistical modelling. Consequently, no respondent quotations, coding frequencies, outer loadings, AVE, HTMT, or bootstrapping values are reported, because such data were never generated. Any claim that the Stand-Still-See model "works" in pastoral or diaconal practice remains, at this stage, a theological proposal rather than an empirically verified outcome. Readers should therefore treat the model as a heuristic instrument awaiting testing, not as a validated framework.

A second limitation concerns the scope of the corpus. The argument engages a purposively selected body of international and national scholarship, but the selection is weighted toward narrative-critical, canonical, and contextual approaches. Reception-historical materials—patristic homilies, medieval commentary, African Independent Church liturgies, and contemporary preaching manuals—are consulted only selectively. This narrows the study's ability to trace how Exodus 14:13 has actually functioned in worshipping communities across time and geography. The absence of ethnographic or archival reception data means that claims about the verse's pastoral resonance remain inferential.

A third limitation is contextual. The article speaks of "present burdens" in general terms, encompassing migration, economic precarity, ecclesial decline, and personal grief. This breadth is deliberate, but it risks abstraction. The study does not anchor its contextual hermeneutic in a single, thickly described case—such as a specific displaced community, a particular congregation facing closure, or a documented instance of systemic oppression. Without such anchoring, the contextual dimension remains illustrative rather than demonstrative. The confessional location of the author also shapes the interpretive horizon; while this is acknowledged rather than concealed, it means the reading is accountable to a particular tradition and not to a neutral standpoint.

A fourth limitation is linguistic and comparative. The analysis foregrounds the Hebrew text with reference to the Septuagint, but it does not undertake a full comparison with the Targums, the Vulgate, or the Peshitta. Nor does it systematically engage the vast rabbinic exegetical tradition on the sea narrative. These omissions limit the study's intertextual reach, though they do not undermine its central exegetical claims.

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These limitations generate concrete avenues for future research. First, empirical reception studies are needed. Qualitative interviews with pastors, chaplains, and lay readers in contexts of displacement or systemic hardship could test whether the Stand-Still-See hermeneutic resonates with lived interpretation, and could refine its criteria. Such work would require ethical clearance and would generate the kind of respondent-level data this study deliberately does not claim. Second, comparative reception-historical research could trace the verse through patristic, Reformation, and Majority World interpretive traditions, examining where the "stand-still" imperative has been read as quietism and where it has been read as courageous witness. Third, a cross-cultural study could place African, Latin American, and Asian readings of Exodus 14:13 in dialogue, testing whether the triadic model travels across contexts or requires contextual recalibration. Fourth, practical-theological action research could embed the model in a specific diaconal or congregational setting over an extended period, documenting outcomes through reflective practice rather than statistical inference. Fifth, interdisciplinary conversation with psychological research on hope and uncertainty (Smithson et al., 2022) and with studies of agency under oppression (Kishani Farahani, 2024) could sharpen the model's account of fear, trust, and sight.

In sum, the study's limitations are the limitations of its genre: it is an exegetical and constructive proposal, not an empirical demonstration. Its value lies in offering a disciplined, contextually accountable framework that others may test, refine, or contest. The glimmer of hope it traces in Exodus 14:13 is offered not as a settled conclusion but as an invitation to further exegetical, historical, and practical-theological inquiry.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to read Exodus 14:13 as a discrete theological utterance rather than as a rhetorical prelude to the sea miracle, and to ask what such a reading might offer communities whose present circumstances resemble Israel's position between Pharaoh's chariotry and the water. Three claims have emerged from the exegetical and constructive work. First, the verse's narrative placement is theologically load-bearing. Positioned between the people's cry of terror in verse 10 and the divine instruction in verse 15, Moses' threefold utterance functions as a pivot: it neither denies the danger nor resolves it, but relocates the community's attention from the approaching army to the coming deliverance. Second, the grammar of the verse—the negation of fear (*yare'*), the imperative to take one's stand (*nitsav*), and the promise of sight (*ra'ah*)—forms an integrated soteriological sequence rather than a list of separate exhortations. Fear is not the antithesis of faith here; it is the condition within which faith is summoned to stand and to see. Third, this sequence can be formalized as an interpretive instrument. The Stand-Still-See hermeneutic, developed in the discussion, offers explicit exegetical controls, a theological horizon, and criteria for contextual appropriation, thereby addressing the gap identified at the outset: the absence of an integrative model that is simultaneously accountable to the Hebrew text, coherent within the canon, and usable in pastoral and public-theological settings.

The contribution of the article is therefore threefold. Exegetically, it offers a focused treatment of a single verse whose density is frequently dispersed across broader treatments of the sea tradition (Kim, 2022). Theologically, it reframes fear as the site of disclosure rather than its obstacle, a move that resonates with work on hope under conditions of existential threat (Smithson et al., 2022) and with studies of hope and survival expectations among populations living under violence (Fekih-Romdhane et al., 2024). Contextually, it proposes that the verse's imperative to stand is neither quietist resignation nor autonomous activism, but a disciplined posture of trust that makes sight possible. This reading speaks to communities experiencing what may be called Red Sea conditions—situations in which retreat is closed, advance is blocked, and the only available act is to stand. The resonance with theological reflection on ecclesial schism and peacebuilding (Magai, 2025), on ethnic diversity in church development (Vaagen, 2026), and on witness under pressure (Chukwunwike, 2026) suggests that the model travels beyond its immediate exegetical setting, though such extension requires further testing.

Several limitations must be stated plainly. This is a qualitative, exegetical-theological study. It employs no survey instrument, no interview protocol, and no statistical procedure; consequently, no respondent quotations, no outer loadings, no AVE or HTMT values, and no bootstrapping results are reported, because none were generated. The corpus is a purposive body of scholarly literature rather than a systematic sample, and the study depends substantially on secondary sources. The Stand-Still-See hermeneutic is proposed as a conceptual instrument; it has not been empirically validated, and its criteria have not been tested against independent coders or reader communities. The confessional location of the argument is acknowledged rather than concealed, which means the interpretation is accountable to a particular tradition of reading even as it employs historical, literary, and contextual tools. These constraints do not invalidate the proposal, but they do bound its claims. The article does not assert generalizability, and it does not claim that its reading exhausts the verse's meaning.

Future research can proceed along at least three lines. Reception-historical study could trace how Exodus 14:13 has been preached, sung, and prayed in specific communities, particularly in contexts of migration, economic precarity, and political repression, thereby supplying the empirical texture this study lacks. Comparative work could place the Stand-Still-See model alongside other contextual hermeneutical frameworks to test whether its threefold structure holds across different texts and traditions. Finally, empirical and practical-theological research could examine how the model functions in pastoral care, diaconal practice, and public theology, using qualitative coding and thematic analysis to assess its usefulness and its limits. Such work would move the proposal from a conceptual contribution toward a tested interpretive practice. Until then, the verse's summons remains what it was in the narrative: a word spoken into fear, asking a trapped people to stand still long enough to see.

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