

BREAD OF LIFE TORAH STUDIES

"I am the bread of life. He who comes to me shall never hunger ..." John 6:35

EXODUS 11-12

Chapter 11

In our last study we looked at Moses and Aaron's ongoing encounter with Pharaoh and the first nine plagues. The last plague will be the most severe; it is that for which all the others were preliminary warnings. Up to this point Yahweh had been showing his power over all of Egypt's gods, and now he would bring death to the firstborn sons. This would fulfill the warning given in Ex. 4:23 – "let **my son** go or I will kill **your son**."

But first Moses is told: 11:2 *Speak now in the hearing of the people, and let every man ask from his neighbor and every woman from her neighbor, articles of silver and articles of gold.* :3 **And the LORD gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians. Moreover the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's servants and in the sight of the people.**

This was foretold to Moses in Ex. 3:21-22: *but every woman shall borrow of her neighbour...* and also spoken to Abraham back in Gen. 15:14— *Then He said to Abram: "Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, ... And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance.*

This certainly seems to be an intrinsic part of the overall plan of God. Commentaries discuss at great length why the LORD insisted that the Children of Israel were told to ask their Egyptian neighbours/companions for vessels of gold and silver. Did they simply 'ask' or did they 'borrow' as KJV and others translate? If we borrow something, we do receive it, but it is not ours to keep.¹

Ultimately, it is believed that this 'fruit of their labour in Egypt' was *transformed* into an offering devoted to building the Sanctuary of God on earth. The wealth gained therefore became a tribute to the LORD. What happened to this wealth? Was much of the gold first used to fashion the Golden Calf? What are your thoughts?

Q. Did this compensate for wages not paid when they were slaves? Is there a spiritual principle at work here? Do silver and gold have symbolic meaning that we should also consider?

10th Plague – Death of the Firstborn threatened: 11:4-10

Pharaoh was considered a god, the son of Ra, the sun god, for the specific purpose of ruling over the land of Egypt. To strike any firstborn was to destroy the heir, but to strike the firstborn son of Pharaoh was to destroy the divine kingship of Egypt.

Hebrew insight: the word *ra* in Hebrew means "evil".

¹ These riches eventually DID end up back in Egypt, as recorded in 1 Kings 14:25-26, when God judged the nation of Israel for their multiplied sins against Him, and they were plundered by the King of Egypt.

Chapter 12 – The Ordinance of Passover - Read 12:1-27

The whole of chapter 12 and most of chapter 13 are taken up with spelling out precisely what they are to do, and at the same time Moses is to give instructions for this is to be observed as an everlasting ordinance to remind the children of Israel forever, that “once they were slaves in Egypt.”

Ex.12:2 *"This month shall be your beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you."*

Egypt was a land where the calendar followed the sun. By switching the way time was figured, it was like telling the Israelites to have nothing more to do with the sun god, Ra. This new way of keeping the calendar according to the lunar cycles, was emphasizing a new way of life that would stand in sharp contrast to life in Egypt. All the Feasts of Israel are tied to their lunar calendar. This first month of the year would forever symbolize freedom from bondage in Egypt. It was the month of redemption and every year, at Passover, it would point to the LORD'S Exodus. Each participant at the Passover seder is to personalize the Exodus as if they themselves were brought out of Egypt - *"On that day tell your son, "I do this because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt."* (Ex.13:8)

The moon is a heavenly body that cannot produce its own light but reflects the light of the sun. Israel also has no light of its own, but she would learn that she was to be a light to the nations—spiritually speaking, reflecting the light of God.

Passover becomes the first set of laws given to the children of Israel. Each and every element of the laws surrounding the Passover has significance which points to the Messianic redemption.

Q. Can you see the parallels with each of the points below?

- v.3 *They shall take for themselves – each man – a lamb for the household.* Each individual household is to respond personally.
- It must be unblemished.
- v.6 *It shall be yours for examination until the 14th day of the month* i.e. 4 days.
- *The entire congregation shall slaughter it in the afternoon.*
- You shall not break a bone in it. 12:36 Jn. 19:36 *For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken.*
- Place the blood on the doorposts and lintel . . . of the house in which you eat it.
- Use hyssop to paint blood on doorframe, 12:22. (Biblically, hyssop is used for cleansing/purifying. See also Jn. 19:29.)
- When the LORD saw the blood he passed over the houses.
- It is to be eaten with unleavened bread – leaven came to represent evil or corruption
- Remove all leaven from homes and eat only unleavened bread for 7 days. (Ex.12:5,19;13:7)
- *.. loins girded, shoes on your feet, staff in your hand.*
- Each man must be circumcised to eat the Pesach-offering. (12:44 & 48)

During the night, Pharaoh sent for Moses and Aaron and told them to get out of Egypt. Pharaoh told them to take their flocks and herds and every person. Pharaoh and the Egyptian people begged the Israelites to hurry up and leave their country (12:31-33).

A Mixed Multitude

We read in v.38 that a “mixed multitude” also went with them. Who were this mixed multitude, and was Moses right in allowing them to join his people? Here is one opinion:²

² These thoughts were taken from: <https://answersfromthebook.org/2011/09/30/the-mixed-multitude/>

One thing we do know from the text, a “Mixed Multitude” accompanied the Twelve Tribes of Jacob as they set out toward Palestine. Neither fully Jewish nor fully Egyptian, these racially mixed people were the sons and daughters of one Hebrew parent and one Egyptian. The product of two separate and competing cultures, these “half-breeds” were perhaps too Egyptian to really fit in with the Children of Israel, and definitely too Jewish to be completely comfortable among their Egyptian brethren.

These were the people who pined for the things they left behind in Egypt whenever times grew tough, the first to grumble and complain when hardships arose. They were an ever-present source of trouble and discord among the Hebrews, eroding the morale of the entire nation by their own negativity. The mixed multitude did not leave Egypt because they were weary of Egypt, hungering for the rest and redemption that God alone can provide. They followed after Moses more out of curiosity and a fascination for the sublime. Power had been demonstrated in the land, supernatural manifestations had stirred the imagination of those with one foot planted firmly in the land of the Pharaohs and one foot tenuously stepping toward the other half of their heritage.

The mixed multitude of the Exodus have been compared with unconverted church members of today—a portrait of those even to this day who divide and subvert the Body of Christ from within, the mixed multitude were those with split loyalties, Just as the mixed multitude were drawn toward a demonstration of power, so are many who fill our pews each Sunday morning. Wherever the Spirit of God is moving, there will always be inquisitive spectators, curious onlookers who will readily identify themselves as true believers in order that they might retain an up close seat to the action. These are not folks hungering for God, but hungering for entertainment, diversions from the ordinary that might delight their emotions rather than feed their souls; coming close to the presence of God yet never fully committing to Him. These are tares among the wheat of God’s true people, grumblers and complainers who gnaw away at the unity of the Body of Christ.

In the light of Numbers 11:4 below, this perspective could be very close to the truth.

“Now the mixed multitude who were among them yielded to intense craving; so the children of Israel also wept again and said: “Who will give us meat to eat?”

Blood on the Doorposts — 12:13 *“...when I see the blood I will pass over you.”*

The Torah itself does not give an explanation for the placement of the lamb’s blood on the doorposts and the lintel of the individual houses, but a look at some Hebrew hints and key texts throws some light on this.

1. Two Hebrew letters resemble a doorway:

- *He n*, which is often used to represent the name of God;
- *Chet n*, is an abbreviation for the word *chai*, 'ח' meaning 'alive' or 'living

2. A sign on your hand & on your forehead

Exodus 13:9 *“It (Passover) shall be as a sign to you on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes, that the Law (Torah) of the LORD may be in your mouth; for with a strong hand Adonai has brought you out of Egypt. You must keep this ordinance at the appointed time year after year. (see Ex. 13:16)*

Compare with these verses from Deuteronomy:

Deut.6:8-9 *“You shall bind them (the commandments) as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.³ “You shall write them on the doorframes of your house and on your gates.*

³ Of course, this is the basis for Jews wearing the *tefillin*.

Deut.11:18-20 *"Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ... And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.*

In both Exodus and Deuteronomy we find references to something being placed as signs on the hands and between the eyes. Exodus references the commandment of Passover specifically, but Deuteronomy says it is the commandments, and makes a clear connection between the sign being placed on the doorframe also.

Q. Do you see a connection between the forehead & hand, and the doorway of a house?

Q. How does the blood on the door frame relate to believers in Christ?

Jer. 31:33 *"I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people."* (also quoted in Hebrews 10:16)

We will also recall that Revelation 13:16 speaks of a mark of the beast being placed on people's right hand or on their foreheads; and three verses later John saw a group called the 144,000 with the "Father's name written in their foreheads" (Rev. 14:1). One group gets the mark of the beast while the other group gets the Mark of God, that is, the name of God in their foreheads., so we see a clear separation of humanity. **DISCUSS**

The question also has been asked by the sages...why is it that only the first Passover in Egypt incorporated this ceremony concerning the blood on the doorposts? There are other instructions that relate to the preparation and consumption of the Passover Sacrifice which are understood to be eternal - to be done whenever the Passover ritual is observed. However, the special instructions concerning the blood of the lamb that first Passover night were given for a one-time event.

Slavery to Servanthood⁴

Avoda is a key word in the first chapter of Exodus. It is used in various forms five times in the following two verses:

¹³*So the Egyptians made the children of Israel **serve** with rigor. ¹⁴And they made their lives bitter with hard **bondage**—in mortar, in brick, and in all manner of **service** in the field. All their **service** in which they made them **serve** was with rigor.*

The word *Avoda* basically means 'to labour as a servant', but what is interesting is that the very same word is used, for example, in Ex. 3:12 *...When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall **serve** God on this mountain,"* and 4:22 *... let My son go that he may **serve** Me.*⁵

The only difference is a change of master—once they served Pharaoh, now will serve God. Either way, one could say there is no real freedom, as there is still the expectation of effort. The world would say that the only freedom that counts is the freedom to do what you like—but that is not freedom but anarchy, not liberty but lawlessness. Mankind needs a system of restraints for society to function as a civil community. God gifted His people with the Torah, a comprehensive series of laws and statutes to enable this.

We see this servanthood theme carried forward in the NT, especially in Romans by Paul, who introduces this book by referring to himself as: *Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God. (NKJV)*

⁴ The insights below are taken from Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, *Covenant & Conversation: Exodus*, p.85-86

⁵ This word is often translated "worship" when referring to service to God.

Rom. 6:17 *But thanks be to God, that you **who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart** to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, 18 and, having been set free from sin, **have become slaves of righteousness.** DISCUSS*

Perfected in Love

¹⁰ *If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. ...* ¹⁴ **You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.** ¹⁵ **No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you....**¹⁷ *These things I command you, that you love one another.*

The Birth of a Nation

We can also view the event of the Exodus as the birth of a nation. On this night of terror, there were screams of pain and anguish throughout Egypt, just as in a natural childbirth, whilst a nation was knitted together and ushered into a brand new life. Early in the morning, Israel stepped forward through their blood-stained doors as one nation, just as the child emerges from the bloody orifice. It was a defining moment.

This metaphor explains why the placement of the lamb's blood was a one-time event. While the Passover meal was to be celebrated as an eternal commemoration of the LORD'S saving intervention, a nation could only be BORN once. Once they had crossed the threshold of delivery, there was no turning back. A new nation has been literally born⁶, redeemed by the blood of a lamb. They are no longer slaves in Egypt.

The Sages of Israel have noticed this theme of rebirth in many of the stories of the Torah. Furthermore, the Rabbis of modern Jewry also understand this theme. For example, a recent article by Rabbi Elchanan Samet states: "The story of Moshe's birth belongs to the series of biblical narratives whose subject is the 'rebirth'. Others that fit this category are:"

Ishmael - While he wanders about with his mother Hagar in the wilderness of Be'er Sheva.

Isaac - is "born again" after being bound to the altar on Mt. Moriah.

Joseph - after being thrown into a pit with intention that he will die there – is "brought back to life"

The Rabbi quoted above is not a Messianic Rabbi, yet he can clearly see that the Torah teaches about resurrection and rebirth.

It is in this context that we should understand John 3: "*Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'* ... *Nicodemus answered and said to Him, "How can these things be?" Jesus answered and said to him, "**Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things?*** In other words, an expert in the Jewish Scriptures, you should not be baffled by Jesus' demand,

The NT concept of being "born again" parallels the redemption of the children of Israel from the bondage of slavery. In each case, it is the 'blood of the Lamb' that is required for all to pass from bondage to freedom, from death to life. Just as each participant in the Passover seder is to personalize this experience for themselves— it is no different for us, we are also able to celebrate being brought out of bondage into freedom.

It is important to note that the Passover sacrifice occurred before the giving of the Torah! Israel did not receive salvation through the Torah (Law), whether by obedience to commandments or the sacrifices of the Torah. It was a gift of grace to be acted on by faith.

⁶ Ezekiel 16 gives a beautiful portrait of this 'birth'.