

EXODUS

From Slavery to Service

6. Passover

**Celebration in the Midst of
Sorrow (Exodus 11—13:16)**

References

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Exodus 11:1-10

**Warning of the Final Plague:
The End is Near**

Exodus 11:1-10: Warning of the Final Plague

- Three main parts:
 - 1. Conversation God and Moses
 - 2. The statements of Moses to Pharaoh
 - 3. Second Address by God to Moses

Exodus 11:1-10: Warning of the Final Plague

- Conversation Between God and Moses (11:1-3)
 - God will conclude the drama
 - The last plague will be so severe that Pharaoh will (11:1):
 - Agree with his advisors (10:7): “Let the people go, so that they may worship the LORD their God.”
 - Not merely allow Israel to leave, but will *drive* Israel out

Exodus 11:1-10: Warning of the Final Plague

- Conversation Between God and Moses (11:1-3)
 - Israelites should “ask” for (JPS Tanakh translation: “borrow”) Egyptian silver and gold (11:2)
 - May echo the Mosaic Law “Year of Release” in Deut 15:1-11
 - Egypt plays the role required by the law of the “Year of Release:” A debtor is to be set free *and* furnished with enough wealth to be a functioning member of the community

Exodus 11:1-10: Warning of the Final Plague

- Conversation Between God and Moses (11:1-3)
 - People will view Hebrews favorably
 - Fretheim: Pharaoh stands alone as recalcitrant
 - Brueggemann: suggests above a conceit, and in reality “the slaves seized what they wanted on the run and the Egyptians conceded their right to nothing”
 - Moses now regarded by Egyptians with awe because of the power he seems to have

Exodus 11:1-10: Warning of the Final Plague

- Statement of Moses to Pharaoh (11:4-8)
 - Tells Pharaoh what the LORD has told him
 - including the detail not in God's conversation with him in 11:1-3 that the tenth plague will be the death of all firstborn sons
 - There will be loud wailing throughout Egypt
 - Recalls the cry of God's firstborn (4:22: "Israel is My firstborn son") in bondage in Egypt
 - A "measure for measure" punishment for Pharaoh's refusal to free Egypt (JPS Study Bible)
 - Brueggemann: Egypt's cry even more intense: "Yahweh is the partisan advocate who is prepared to go to any extreme in defense of this vulnerable child"

Exodus 11:1-10: Warning of the Final Plague

- Statement of Moses to Pharaoh (11:4-8)
 - Note “I will go throughout Egypt” and “every firstborn son... will die” allows ambiguity about God’s direct action here
 - God will make a distinction between Egypt and Israel
 - No mention that blood on door is needed for God to make a distinction
 - Moses leaves Pharaoh of his own accord in “hot anger”
 - Fretheim: Anger that in the end this final plague needed

Exodus 12:1-28

Passover, Past and Present

Exodus 12:1-28: Passover, Past and Present

- Narrative interrupted to describe the liturgies to be associated with the Exodus
 - A sacrificial banquet to be held while the final plague is in progress
 - A banquet to be repeated “throughout the ages” to commemorate the event, the prototype of the Seder meal
 - Hebrew name *Pesah* originally referred to the festival of the banquet only; later it incorporated the 7 day **Festival of Unleavened Bread** that followed

Exodus 12:1-28: Passover, Past and Present

- Scholars have *speculated* that two pre-existent festivals may have been merged to form what became the **Passover**:
 - 1. Older shepherd / pastoral rite observed in the spring
 - Demons could be warded off by applying the blood of a sacrifice to their doors
 - Blood was magically protective
 - Hebrew name for Passover: *Pesah*, probably best translated as “protective offering” rather than “Pass Over”

Exodus 12:1-28: Passover, Past and Present

- 2. An agrarian rite also observed in the spring
 - Possible origin for the **Feast of Unleavened Bread**
 - Perhaps began as a rite of abstinence, marking the uncertainty over the success of the coming grain harvest

Exodus 12:1-28: Passover, Past and Present

- *Liturgical* year commences with the month of the Exodus (12:2)
 - Months referred to by ordinal numbers (# months since Passover month)
 - every reference to a month thus commemorates the Exodus
 - This first month later called **Nisan** (~March or April)
 - These later month names are from the Babylonian calendar, borrowed during the Exile
 - *Calendar* Year begins in the *seventh* month (**Tishri**) with the New Year holiday **Rosh Ha-Shanah**

Exodus 12:1-28: Passover, Past and Present

- Timeline of Passover:
 - 10th day of month: chose an *unblemished* (standard requirement for sacrificial animal) lamb, a yearling male sheep or goat
 - 14th day of the month:
 - assembled congregation of Israelites will slaughter the lamb at twilight
 - Blood put on doorposts and lintels
 - Eat the flesh that night roasted over a fire, along with unleavened bread (*matzot*) and bitter herbs (*maror*)
 - Eat prepared to leave at a moment's notice
 - Eaten during the night of the final plague

Exodus 12:1-28: Passover, Past and Present

- Timeline of Passover:
 - Next 7 days (to 21st day of the month): **Feast of Unleavened Bread** (*Hag ha-Matzot*)
 - First and last days: sacred occasions when no work should be done other than the food preparation

Exodus 12:1-28: Passover, Past and Present

- Bitter Herbs (*maror*)
 - Pungent condiments
 - Popular among pastoral nomads
 - Interpreted as recalling bitterness of slavery
 - Commonly used: Romaine lettuce, horseradish

Exodus 12:1-28: Passover, Past and Present

- Unleavened Bread (*matzah*)
 - Was probably similar to pita bread
 - Frequently accompanied sacrifices
 - Haste of their departure left no time to bake leavened bread
 - Week long abstinence from unleavened bread: a reminder of how God had so overwhelmed the Egyptians that they drove the Israelites from Egypt to their freedom
 - Other associations:
 - “Bread of affliction” eaten during slavery
 - Bread of mourning
 - Bread of the poor
 - The manna from heaven

Exodus 12:1-28: Passover, Past and Present

- Unleavened Bread (*matzah*)
 - Exodus 12:17: “You shall observe the [Feast of] Unleavened Bread
 - Taken literally by some Jews: grain guarded for signs of fermentation from harvest until ground into flour (guarded matzah = *matzah shemurah*)

Exodus 12:1-28: Passover, Past and Present

- Modern Passover Sedar
 - Torah commands story of Exodus be recounted to children
 - Pattern for telling is the **sedar** (Hebrew for “order”)
 - Passover feast came to be called the sedar meal or simply the **sedar**
 - Program for the sedar contained in the **haggadah**
 - No sacrificial lamb (no sacrifice possible after destruction of second temple in 70 AD)
 - Roasted shankbone displayed as a token

Exodus 12:1-28: Passover, Past and Present

- Modern Passover Sedar
 - Additional Foods added:
 - Parsley or Green Herbs: represent springtime and renewal of hope
 - Parsley dipped in salt water, which represents tears of slavery
 - *Haroset*, a mixture of apples, raisins, lemon, and cinnamon. Represents the mortar used to build Pharaoh's buildings
 - Roasted egg. Represents triumph of life over death
 - Four cups of wine recall four terms of redemption in Exodus 6:6-8: "I will free you... deliver you... redeem you... take you to be my people"
 - Fifth cup left for Elijah to decide if "I will bring you into the land" is a subset of "I will redeem you" or an additional benefit

Exodus 12:1-28: Passover, Past and Present

- Modern Passover Sedar
 - Order of sedar:
 - First cup of wine
 - Dip greens in salt water
 - Eat *matzoh*
 - Eat *maror*
 - Eat *matzoh* with *haroset*
 - Tell the story of the Exodus
 - Second cup of wine
 - Dinner
 - Blessing after the meal
 - Third cup of wine
 - Psalms and songs
 - Conclusion
 - Fourth cup of wine

Exodus 12:1-28: Passover, Past and Present

- Modern Passover Sedar
 - Opening prayer: “This is the bread of affliction, the poor bread, which our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt. Let all who are hungry come and eat. Let all who are in want share in this Passover. Now we celebrate here, next year in the Land of Israel. Now we are still slaves. Next year may we all be free.”

Exodus 12:1-28: Passover, Past and Present

- Modern Passover Seder
 - Each Jew must look on himself / herself as if he/she had participated in the Exodus from Egypt
 - Haggadah: “In every generation one should look upon himself as if he personally had gone out of Egypt... It was not only our ancestors whom the Holy One, Blessed is He, redeemed, but also us along with them.”
 - Father says: “We observe this seder because of what God did for *me* when I came forth out of Egypt”

Exodus 12:1-28: Passover, Past and Present

- “Those who celebrate the Passover are transported into the past, the past is brought into the present, and both point towards the future.” (Jacobson)

Exodus 12:1-28: Passover, Past and Present

- Passover During Jesus' Time
 - Sixth Century BC: King Josiah moved Passover Celebration to the Temple in Jerusalem
 - Became a pilgrimage festival. 100,000 people brought lambs to Jerusalem to sacrifice in the temple
 - Lambs were cooked outdoors in open places in city. Meals eaten in rented rooms, where people reclined at a table in Roman fashion
 - Philo and Josephus: an extravagant, joyous celebration

Exodus 12:1-28: Passover, Past and Present

- Passover and New Testament Theology
 - Matthew, Mark and Luke (Synoptic Gospels): Last Supper was a Passover meal
 - John: Jesus crucified on the day Passover lambs sacrificed at temple
 - Last Supper hence a meal the day before Passover
 - The Eucharist is a reenactment of the Last Supper Passover meal
 - We are again transported to the past, and the past brought to the present, with both pointing to the future
 - We remember God's great redemptive sacrifice at Calvary was for each one of us

Exodus 12:1-28: Passover, Past and Present

- Blood on the Doorposts and Lintels
 - Needed for God to “protect” or “pass over” the Israelites?
 - As a marker to help God?
 - Magically protective?
 - Not needed for God – only a “sign for you” (Exodus 12:12)?

Exodus 12:1-28: Passover, Past and Present

- God or the Destroyer
 - God strikes down the firstborn?
 - Or: the Destroyer does the killing
 - An “Angel of Death”?
 - Merely a name for a the destructive plague / pestilence?

Exodus 12:29-42

The Tenth Plague and the Exodus

Exodus 12:29-42: The Tenth Plague and the Exodus

- A story of both death and new life
- 12:29: “In the middle of the night the LORD struck down all the first-born in the land of Egypt...”
- Moses and Aaron summoned in the night and ordered to depart “to worship the LORD as you said!”
 - Is Pharaoh just granting what Moses originally asked for, a 3 day leave?
- Pharaoh’s request for a blessing:
 - His capitulation to the LORD is complete
 - Recalls Jacob’s blessing of another Pharaoh in Gen 47:7, 10

Exodus 12:29-42: The Tenth Plague and the Exodus

- Exodus 12:35: Israelites ask for articles of gold and silver and clothing; Egyptians give them what they asked for
 - Fretheim: Hearts of Egyptians softened towards Israelites, who can leave “dressed out,” with raiment and jewelry befitting the new level of life God has raised them to
 - Brueggemann: “The language of ‘favor from Yahweh’ and ‘asking’ in fact disguises marauding and plundering, which the erstwhile slaves work against their deeply resented masters.”

Exodus 12:29-42: The Tenth Plague and the Exodus

- Exodus 12:37: From Rameses to Succoth
 - Rameses
 - the Capital, symbol of Egyptian power
 - A city where Israel had worked as slaves
 - Succoth
 - A days' journey from Rameses
 - In the eastern Nile delta, near Goshen where the Israelites lived

Exodus 12:29-42: The Tenth Plague and the Exodus

- Exodus 12:37: ...600,000 men on foot...
 - Num. 1:46 and 2:32 gives 603,550
 - Men of military age, 20 and older. If women and children included: 2 to 2.5 million total!
 - Unlikely Goshen and the Sinai could have supported so many
 - *Elef* (= “thousand”) sometimes meant “clan” or “squad”
 - Number probably hyperbole
 - Fretheim suggest 2 to 2.5 million was the population of Israel at the time of Kings David and Solomon, and thus a liturgical reminder that they too had all experienced the Exodus

Exodus 12:29-42: The Tenth Plague and the Exodus

- Exodus 12:38: mixed multitude
 - Meaning:
 - Non-Israelites: other enslaved groups in Egypt, not descendants of 12 sons of Jacob
 - Earliest Israel may not have been a purely ethnic community, but a marginated socioeconomic group (Brueggemann)
 - Fretheim: other enslaved groups had been integrated into the community of faith.
“Freedom for Israel means freedom for others”
 - God’s redemption is for the sake of the entire world

Exodus 12:29-42: The Tenth Plague and the Exodus

- Exodus 12:40-41: 430 years in Egypt
 - Consistent with 400 years of slavery predicted in Genesis 15:13
 - Inconsistent with Genesis 15:16, which states Israel would return in the fourth generation
 - Inconsistent with Moses as the great-grandson of Levi (Exodus 6:16-20)
- Exodus 12:41: Israelites organized in “companies,” “ranks,” or “divisions” – i.e. organized as an army

Exodus 12:29-42: The Tenth Plague and the Exodus

- Exodus 12:42: a night of vigil. Used in several senses:
 - 1. Vigil by God. The night of God's protection of Israel at the Exodus
 - 2. Vigil to God
 - Israel's vigilance that night waiting for God to deliver them at the Exodus
 - Throughout the ages: Israel's observance of the Passover sacrifice.
 - Fretheim: "Israel's keeping remembers God's keeping"

Exodus 12:43-51

Supplementary Directions for the Passover

Exodus 12:43-51. Supplementary Directions

- Gives seven supplementary rules for observing Passover for “foreigners,” “strangers,” (resident aliens), slaves, and employees
- Exodus 12:48: a Resident alien can celebrate the Passover and “be regarded as a native of the land” if all his males are circumcised
 - The only formal procedure in the Bible for converting foreigners to Israelites

Exodus 13:1-16

**Special Observances:
Body and Memory**

Exodus 13:1-16. Special Observances

- Exodus 13:1-2: The firstborn, human and animal, belongs to God
 - Genesis 4:4: Abel brought the choicest of the firstlings of his flocks as a gift to the LORD
 - In an agricultural economy, the rent is often the first share of produce from the land or first born animal
 - an acknowledgement of ownership and sovereignty
 - God is the giver of life; the life of the firstborn was consecrated to God in gratitude by the Israelites

Exodus 13:1-16. Special Observances

- **Exodus 13:3-10: the Feast of Unleavened Bread**
 - Repeats material in Exodus 12:14-20
 - Exodus 13:8: anticipates telling the story of the Exodus will provoke the questions of children
 - “Your shall tell your child on that day, ‘It is because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt.’”

Exodus 13:1-16. Special Observances

- Exodus 13:9: “It shall serve for you as a sign on your hand and as a reminder on your forehead, so that the teaching of the LORD may be on your lips.”
 - Jewish tradition reinterprets Exodus 13:9 in the light of similar but more literal commands in Deut. 6:8 and Deut 11.18 as the justification for wearing **tefillin** or **phylacteries**
 - Phylacteries contain the verses:
 - Exodus 13:1-10
 - Exodus 13:11-16
 - Deuteronomy 6:5-9
 - Deuteronomy 11:13-21

Exodus 13:1-16. Special Observances

- Exodus 13:11-16: More on the First-borns belonging to God
 - Consecration of firstborn to God given *new* rationale:
 - the commemoration of God's slaying the firstborn of Egypt at the Exodus
 - the sparing of the firstborn of Israel at the Exodus (Note this sparing is not explicitly mentioned)
 - Exodus 13:15: *the LORD killed all the first-born in the land of Egypt... Therefore I sacrifice to the LORD every male that first opens the womb, but every firstborn of my sons I redeem."*

Exodus 13:1-16. Special Observances

- Fretheim: “Is it possible that the firstborn belong to God ... because the Egyptian children were killed? This is thus an everlasting reminder in Israel at what cost Israel’s firstborn were redeemed.”
- Note definition of firstborn is the firstborn of the *mother*, not the *father* (“that first opens the womb”)
- Human firstborns also belong to God, and must be redeemed from God
 - Jewish Practice: *Pidyon ha-ben* (“Redemption of the Son”) takes place 31 days after birth
 - Son is redeemed by giving “kohen” (a descendant of the priestly family) 5 units of local currency

Exodus 13:1-16. Special Observances

- Firstborns in the New Testament
 - 1 Corinthians 15:20: “But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the *first fruits* of those who have died.”