

Exodus 12

God informed Moses at 4:22-23 that He would kill Pharaoh's firstborn if Pharaoh did not allow Israel to leave the slavery in Egypt. God sent sign, after sign, after sign to persuade Pharaoh to release Israel. Instead, the signs hardened Pharaoh's heart. In 11:4-8, Moses informed Israel, and apparently Pharaoh, of God's plan to kill the firstborn in Egypt. In verse 8, Moses left Pharaoh's presence extremely angry. This chapter records both the striking of the firstborn in Egypt, but also a celebration of the salvation of Israel from the "destroying angel" which God wanted Israel to celebrate in perpetuity. It is that celebration which Jesus will change into the Lord's Supper to be celebrated every Lord's Day (Matt. 26:26-29; Acts 20:7; Rev. 1:10).

TRANSLATION - 12:1-20:

1 And Jehovah said to Moses and to Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, **2** "This month to you [will be] the first of the months, this [is] the first to you for months of the year. **3** You all speak to all the assembly of Israel, saying 'On the tenth of this month you all take for yourself a man a kid for the house of his fathers, a kid for the house. **4** And if it is too small the house to be from a kid, then take it and his neighbor near to his house by valuation of the souls, a man, before him to eat, you will count on the kid. **5** A perfect kid, male a son of a year he will be to you from the lambs and from the goats you will take. **6** And it will be to you all for keeping it until fourteen days of this month and you will slaughter it, all the congregation of the assembly of Israel, between the evenings.

7 "And take from the blood and give it on the two doorposts and on the upper door frame on the houses where they will eat in among them. **8** And they will eat the flesh in that night, roasted in fire and unleavened bread on bitter herbs they will eat. **9** Do not eat from it raw, not boiled, cooked in water except roasted in fire, the head with its legs with its inner organs. **10** And you will not leave from it until morning, and that being left from it until morning in fire you will burn. **11** And thus you will eat it, your loins prepared, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand and you will eat it in haste, this Passover to Jehovah.

12 "And I will cross over in the land of Egypt in this night and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from man even to beast and against all the gods of Egypt I will make judgments. I [am] Jehovah. **13** And the blood will be for you for a sign on the houses where you [are] there and I will see the blood and I will pass over you all and there will not be among you a plague for the destroying one when He strikes in the land of Egypt. **14** And this day will be for you all for a memorial and you will celebrate it a festival to Jehovah for your generations, an indefinite ordinance you will celebrate.

15 "Seven days unleavened bread you will eat. Surely on the first day you will remove leaven from your houses because all eating leaven let him be cut off, that soul, from Israel; from the first day until the seventh day. **16** And in the first day, an assembly of holiness and in the seventh day an assembly of holiness will be for you all, all work will not be done in it, except which he will eat, for every soul, except he will do for you all. **17** And you will keep the unleavened bread because in this very same day I will bring out your hosts from the land of Egypt and you will keep this day for your generations by an indefinite ordinance. **18** In the first, on the fourteenth day of the month in the evening you will eat the unleavened bread, until the twenty-first day of the month at evening. **19** Seven days leaven will not be found in your houses because all eating leaven will be cut off, that soul, from the assembly of Israel, stranger or native born of the land. **20** All leaven you will not eat. In all your residences, you will eat unleavened bread."

HEBREW WORDS:

"Assembly" (ver. 3) is used 171 times in the OT to refer to the assembly of Israel. It is used in Exodus 15 times, and in Numbers 83 times. This is its first use in the Bible. This points

to the beginning of Israel as a nation. "Kid" is a sheep or goat (Deut. 14:4), used 47 times. Jewish practice eventually settled on the lamb. "Valuation" (ver. 4) is used only here and Lev. 27:23. "Souls" is used earlier at 1:5; 4:19. "To count" or "to reckon" is used only here in the OT. "Perfect" is used 91 times in the OT; it was used earlier at Genesis 6:9 and 17:1. It will only be used in Exodus here and 29:1. The word is used in Leviticus, however, 22 times. "Male" is used 82 times; in Exodus at 12:5, 48; 13:12, 15. "Lamb" is used 107 times; in Exodus, at 12:5; 29:38-41. "Goats" is used 74 times in the OT; in Exodus, at 12:5; 25:4; 26:7; 35:6, 23, 26; 36:14. "To slaughter" (ver. 6) is used 81 times in the OT; in Exodus it is used at 12:6, 21; 29:11, 16, 20; 34:25. "Congregation" was used earlier in Genesis 28:3; 35:11; 48:4; 49:6. It is related to the noun translated "preacher," from which the book Ecclesiastes takes its name. The word is used 123 times; in Exodus at 12:6; 16:3. As we pointed out at verse 3, we see here the beginning of Israel as a nation. "Assembly," a synonym for "congregation" was used in verse 3.

"Blood" (ver. 7) was used earlier at 4:9, 25-26. Blood is the essence of life (Lev. 17:11). "Doorposts" is used 19 times in the OT; in Exodus only in this context (12:7, 22-23) and 21:6. "Upper door frame" or "lintel" is only used in this context: 12:7, 22-23. "Roasted" (ver. 8) is used here (12:8-9) and Isaiah 44:16. "Unleavened bread" was used earlier at Genesis 19:3. It is used 53 times in the OT; in Exodus 16 times. "Bitter herbs" is used here (12:8); Num. 9:11; Deut. 32:32; Job 13:26; 20:14, 25; Lam. 3:15. "Bitter herbs" is related to the verb "to be bitter" used earlier at 1:14. This word "raw" (ver. 9) is only used here in the Bible. "Boiled" is used here and Num. 6:19; it has the same consonants as the following verb, "to cook," which is used 28 times in the OT. In Exodus, it is used here; 16:23; 23:19; 29:31; 34:26. "To leave or remain" (ver. 10) was used earlier at 10:15. "To burn" is only used in Exodus at 12:10; 29:14, 34; 32:20, out of 117 times. It is related to the creature, the "seraphim."

"Loins" (ver. 11) is used in Exodus at 12:11; 28:42, out of 47 uses. "Prepared" is a participle in the Hebrew, used only here; 1 Kings 20:11; Joel 1:8. "Sandals" was used earlier at 3:5. This is its last usage in Exodus. "Feet" was used earlier at 3:5. This word for "staff" is not the word used earlier of Moses and Aaron's staffs. This word is used only here in Exodus, out of 18 times. "In haste" is only used here; Deut. 16:3; Isa. 52:12. "Passover" is used 49 times in the OT, especially in 2 Chronicles (19 times). In Exodus, it is used in this chapter (12:11, 21, 27, 43, 48) and 34:25. The expression "Passover to Jehovah" is used 9 times: Exo. 12:48; Num. 9:10, 14; Deut. 16:1-2; 2 Kings 23:21; 2 Chron. 30:1, 5; 35:1.

"To cross" (ver. 12) is used 553 times. It is used in Exodus 15 times. "To strike" is the verb first seen at 2:11-13. "Firstborn" was seen earlier at 4:22-23; see comments there. "Judgments" was seen earlier at 6:6; 7:4. "Sign" (ver. 13) was used earlier at 3:12; 4:8-9, 17, 28, 30. This verb "to pass over" is only used 5 times in the OT: 12:13, 23, 27; 1 Kings 18:21; Isa. 31:5. It is related to the celebration "Passover." They have the same consonants. This word for "plague" is only used 7 times in the OT: 12:13; 30:12; Num. 8:19; 17:11-12; Josh. 22:17; Isa. 8:14. "To destroy" is used 152 times in the OT; it means "to ruin, spoil, annihilate." It is used in Exodus only in this context: 12:13, 23.

"Memorial" (ver. 14) is used 24 times; in Exodus, at 12:14; 13:9; 17:14; 28:12, 29; 30:16; 39:7. "To celebrate" is related to the noun "festival", which was used earlier at 5:1. "Festival" was used earlier at 10:9. "Ordinance" is used 104 times; in Exodus at 12:14, 17, 43; 13:10; 27:21; 28:43; 29:9. It is used in Leviticus 26 times. Scholars do not know what distinguished a "rule" from an "ordinance" or a "statute" or "command" or "law." These all seem to be synonyms, but what shade of meaning each denoted is not understood today.

"Unleavened bread" (ver. 15) was used earlier at 12:8. "To remove" was used earlier at 5:5. "Leaven" is only used 5 times: Exo. 12:15, 19; 13:7; Lev. 2:11; Deut. 16:4. The second word "leaven" is different, being used 11 times; in Exodus at 12:15; 13:3, 7; 23:18; 34:25. "To be cut off" was used earlier at 4:25; 8:9. "Assembly" (ver. 16) is used 23 times in the OT, all but five times (Isa. 1:13; 4:5; Neh. 8:8) are used in Leviticus and Numbers. It is used twice here at 12:16. The noun is related to the verb "to call;" the noun refers to those who are "called together," thus an assembly. "Holiness" was used earlier at 3:5. "Work" is used 167 times in the OT; it is used in Exodus 33 times.

“You will keep” (ver. 17) is used 469 times in the OT. It was used in Exodus at 10:28. It will be used 24 times in Exodus. “Hosts” was used earlier at 6:26; 7:4. “Ordinance” was used earlier at verse 14. “Unleavened bread” (ver. 19) was used earlier at verse 15. “Leaven” was used earlier at verse 8. “Leaven” (ver. 19) is used only here (12:19-20) and Isa. 63:1. “Assembly” was used earlier at verses 3, 6. “Stranger” was used earlier at 2:22. “Native born” is used 17 times in the OT; it is used in Exodus only in this context: 12:19, 48-49. “Residences” (ver. 20) is related to the word “to stay.” It was used earlier at 10:23. “Unleavened” was used at verses 8, 15, 17-20.

HEBREW GRAMMAR:

The word “destroying one” (ver. 13) is a participle in the Hebrew, denoting one who was in the process of implementing the action.

REFERENCES AND ALLUSIONS TO GENESIS:

In Genesis 6:9, Noah was described as being “perfect” (Exo. 12:5). In Genesis 17:1, God commanded Abraham to *be perfect*. Here, Israel is to offer “perfect” animals for their redemption. God had threatened that if any of Abraham’s descendants refused to be circumcised, they would be “cut off.” Genesis 17:14. Now, God raises the celebration of the Passover to the same level of importance (ver. 15).

ARCHAEOLOGY:

We do not know which “bitter herbs” (ver. 8) were eaten, but endive and chicory are indigenous to Egypt.

COMMENTARY:

Jehovah begins by stating that the celebration of the “Passover” will begin Israel’s religious calendar (ver. 2). Israel will have a “civil” calendar and they will have a “religious” calendar. Our school systems do the same thing when they start in the fall and end in early summer, which is a “calendar” separate from the regular calendar which begins in January and ends in December. The first month is called “Abib” (13:4; 23:15; 34:18; Deut. 16:1; Ezek. 3:15), which is called “Nisan” after the Babylonian exile (Neh. 2:1; Esther 3:7). This month corresponds with our March / April.

The phrases “assembly of Israel” (ver. 3) and “congregation of the assembly of Israel” (ver. 6) indicate that the family of Jacob is now being viewed as a whole, as a nation. On the tenth day of the month, each household (unless it was too small to eat a whole kid) was to take a male kid, either a lamb or a goat. Jewish practice eventually settled on the lamb. Verse 5 states the kid was to be a male, within the first year (a mature animal) and they were to keep it until the 14th of the month. Why Israel was to keep the lamb for four days before the sacrifice we are not told. Perhaps it was time to get everything in order, beginning with the sacrifice, for the feast. God did not want any procrastinators! The expression “between the evenings” is ambiguous; most scholars believe it refers to dusk. The Jewish practice was to kill the lamb between the 9th and 11th hours, which is 3-5 PM.

Blood was to be drained out of the kid (ver. 7) and then its blood was to be “given” or “sprinkled” on each side of the door and the upper door frame (“lintel”) on the house where each family was eating. The lamb was to be roasted, not boiled (for the sake of time), and its meat was to be eaten completely (ver. 10). Unleavened bread with bitter herbs was eaten with it. The whole lamb was to be roasted, without wasting anything edible and without dismembering the animal for the sake of time (ver. 10). Any leftovers were to be burned.

Israel was supposed to eat the lamb, unleavened bread, and bitter herbs with their clothes and sandals on, prepared to leave immediately (ver. 11). This verse describes the meal as the “Passover to Jehovah.” That is, it was done to honor and glorify Jehovah God for sparing the lives of the Israelite firstborn at the moment He takes the lives of the firstborn of Egypt. The name of the “Passover” comes from the verb “to pass over” used in verses 13, 23,

27. Just as in English, the Hebrew words are related: פֶּסַח (“Passover”) and the verb: פָּסַח (“to pass over”). Without knowing Hebrew, one can easily see the similarity in the two words.

As God did frequently in the book of Genesis, in verse 12, He uses an anthropomorphism to suggest His condescension to humanity: “*I will go through* the land of Egypt.” Secondly, He says “I will strike all the firstborn.” “Man to animal” suggests the comprehensive nature of the plague. Additionally, God will strike “against all the gods of Egypt.” As He had stated before, these plagues were “judgments” against Egypt. Finally, God states the rationale for His authority: “I am Jehovah; I am Who I am” (cf. 3:14-15).

The blood on the doorposts would be a sign that the residences of those houses had been faithful to obey God’s instructions (ver. 13). It is not the case that God *needed* to be able to see the blood; He is omniscient. The purpose was to involve Israel in an act of obedience to see if they had the faith, based on their observation of the plagues, to trust God to deliver them. God promised that, even as they heard the weeping and wailing of the Egyptians, He would see the blood they had sprinkled and He would “pass over” their houses and not kill their firstborn. In verse 13, Moses identifies the One taking life as the “destroying One.” This might be the “angel of Jehovah” seen earlier in the Scriptures. If so, He has the authority and power of Jehovah God.

The day God strikes the firstborn of Egypt will be for a “memorial” for Israel (ver. 14) to celebrate as a “festival” (which He will detail shortly), and it was to be celebrated “for generations,” until the true Passover Lamb (Jesus Christ) comes to earth (John 1:29). This celebration will last “indefinitely” (the word often translated “permanent” or “everlasting”). Clearly the celebration was not “forever” since it was fulfilled in the coming of Jesus Christ, but it was something they were to “celebrate.”

In verse 15, Moses details a related celebration of which “Passover” would be the first day. The longer celebration was called the “Feast of Unleavened Bread.” This celebration would last for a week. On the first day, the Israelite should remove all leaven from their home. Those eating leaven during this celebration would be “cut off” from Israel. “To be cut off” (ver. 15) could refer to death or to exclusion from the community of Israel (31:14; Lev. 20:2-3). The phrase is used 36 times in the Law. No analogy to this phrase has been found in other Ancient Near Eastern literature. Why God required Israel to remove leaven is unknown, unless it was simply to test their obedience. While it is true that “leaven” is often a metaphor in the NT (see below under “Application: NT Writers”) for impurity and sin, that does not mean God used it that way under the Law.

On the first day of the celebration of Unleavened Bread, there should be an assembly, a holy assembly (ver. 16). On the final day there was also to be a holy assembly. There was to be no work done on those days of assembly, except the preparing and consumption of the meal. Verse 17 ties in the celebration of Unleavened Bread with the exodus from Egypt: “in this very day.” The word “hosts” portrays the nation of Israel as an army, the army of the Lord; see 6:26; 7:4; 12:51. Notably, in 15:3 Jehovah is identified as a warrior. At the end of verse 17, Jehovah reiterates the fact that the Feast was for future generations, to be celebrated indefinitely.

The celebration begins on the first month of their religious calendar, on the fourteenth day, they would eat unleavened bread, through the 21st day of the month (ver. 18). Usually, a pinch of leavened dough would be set aside to be used for a new mixture of dough. For that seven day period, no leaven was to be found in the Israelites’ homes. Those eating leaven will be “cut off” from among the nation of Israel, whether the individual was native, a stranger, or a visitor. Verse 20 emphasizes again that no leaven was to be eaten in the homes; they were not to eat leavened bread during that seven-day period. The words “leaven” or “unleavened bread” are used seven times between verse 15 and 20, with once more in verse 4 and twice in verse 39.

APPLICATION:

Moses’ contemporaries – For further instructions from the Law for the Jews, on the Passover, see Lev. 23:4-8; Num. 9:1-5, 9-14; 28:16-17; Deut. 16:1-8. God wanted Israel to

continue to remember that they had been slaves in Egypt and God had redeemed them: Deut. 5:15. The Israelites will celebrate a Passover in Numbers 9, in the wilderness.

Later Jewish writers - While we do not know why God had Israel keep the lamb for four days before sacrificing it, later, under Joshua (4:19; 5:8-11), the time of waiting allowed men to heal who had to be circumcised before they could take the Passover. Other references to the Passover or Feast of Unleavened Bread are found in: 2 Chron. 30:1-27 (under King Hezekiah); 35:1-19 (under King Josiah); Ezra 6:19-22 (under Ezra's leadership). Ezekiel will picture blood being sprinkled on the doorframe and upper beam of the temple in his vision of 45:18-20. There are other calls to remember: Neh. 4:14; Ecc. 12:1; Isa. 46:9; Psa. 78, 105, 106.

NT writers - The blood of Jesus is significant for Christians: Rom. 5:9; Eph. 1:7; Heb. 13:12; 1 Peter 1:18-19; 1 John 1:7; Rev. 1:5. "Blood" is mentioned 97 times in the NT. The fruit of the vine for the Lord's Supper symbolizes His blood of the new covenant, poured out for the forgiveness of sins (Matt. 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; Heb. 13:20). Judas acknowledged that He had betrayed "innocent" blood (Matt. 27:4). Disciples of Christ are supposed to "drink His blood" (John 6:53-56), a metaphor for believing in His words and obeying His commands; see John 6:47-48. Christ shed His blood in His death: John 19:34. Christ purchased His church with His blood: Acts 20:28; Rev. 5:9.

His blood is significant because Jesus is our perfect Passover Lamb, that is He is without sin: 1 Peter 1:19; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 9:14. Christ is our offering for sin, in His blood through faith (Rom. 3:25). Thus we are justified by His blood (Rom. 5:9). We have redemption (a term taken from the exodus: Exodus 6:6) through His blood, identified as the "forgiveness of sins" (Eph. 1:7). Mankind is brought near God by the blood of Christ (Eph. 2:13). Christ made peace between man and God through the blood of His cross (Col. 1:20).

For references to the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread, see Luke 2:41; John 2:13; 6:4; 11:55; Acts 12:3-4; 20:6. Using the sprinkled blood as a metaphor (which Peter also uses: 1 Peter 1:2), the Hebrew writer will say that Christians' hearts are sprinkled by the blood of Christ when their bodies are washed in pure water (a reference to baptism; see Hebrews 10:22). Jesus "released" us from our sins by His blood (Rev. 1:5), in which we are washed (1 Cor. 6:9-11), through the waters of baptism (Acts 22:16).

The two books which use "blood" most frequently are Hebrews (23 times) and Revelation. Christ came in flesh and blood so He could take away the power of Satan (Heb. 2:14). It is through His own blood that He obtained "eternal redemption" for faithful obedient people (Heb. 9:12). As with the Law of Moses, "all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (9:22). Therefore, mankind must be washed with the blood of Christ, which the Hebrew writer tells us occurs at immersion in water (10:22). The blood of bulls and goats, commanded under the Law of Moses, could not take away sin (Heb. 10:4). We enter into heaven by the blood of Christ (Heb. 10:19). We are sanctified by the blood of the (new) covenant (Heb. 10:29; 13:12).

"Blood" is used in Revelation 19 times. Few of those references are to the blood of Christ. In addition to the passages already mentioned, in 7:14, John tells us that Christians' robes are made white by the blood of the Lamb. Christians win over persecution through the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 12:11).

The NT teaches that the Lord's Supper is also a "communal" meal, eaten with one's spiritual family, the church: 1 Corinthians 10:16-17.

"Leaven" is often, but not always, used in a negative sense in the NT: Matthew 16:6; 1 Cor. 5:6-8. The NT also calls on Christians to "remember:" 2 Tim. 2:8.

Prager, in his commentary¹, gives nine reasons why it is important for us to remember, which applies also to the Christians' celebration of the Lord's Supper. We summarize those here:

1. It gives importance to the event.
2. It helps us learn from the past, which helps give us wisdom to do better.

¹ Prager, 137-138.

3. It links us to others who have engaged in the same ritual of remembering.
4. It keeps alive the memory of those who have gone before and keeps us from forgetting the evil of the past and to do better.
5. It helps us be thankful for what has happened in the past.

TRANSLATION - 12:21-28:

21 Moses called to the elders of Israel and said to them, “Grab and take for yourselves a flock by your families and slaughter the passover. **22** And take a bunch of hyssop and dip in blood which [is] in a basin and sprinkle on the upper door frame and on the two door posts from the blood which [is] in the basin but you will not go out, a man, from the door of the house until morning. **23** And Jehovah will cross over to strike Egypt and He will see the blood on the upper door frame and on the two door posts and Jehovah will pass over on the door and the destroying one will not give to come to your house to strike. **24** And you will keep this word for an ordinance to you and to your sons indefinitely. **25** And it will be that you will come to the land which Jehovah gives to you just as He spoke that you will keep this service.

26 “And it will be that they will say to you, your sons, “What [is] this service to you?” **27** And you will say, “The sacrifice of Passover this [is] to Jehovah who passed over the houses of the sons of Israel in Egypt when He struck Egypt and our houses He delivered.”

And the people knelt and worshipped. **28** And they went and did, the sons of Israel, just as Jehovah commanded Moses and Aaron; thus they did.

HEBREW WORDS:

“Grab” (ver. 21) is used here and at 19:13 in Exodus; the verb is used 36 times. “To slaughter” was used earlier at verse 6. “Passover” was used earlier at verse 11. “Hyssop” (ver. 22) is used 10 times in the OT, eight of which are in the Law of Moses. It is only used here in Exodus. “To dip” is used 16 times in the OT, only here in Exodus. “Basin” is only used here in Exodus, out of 7 uses. “To sprinkle” is used quite often in the OT, 150 times. It was used earlier at 4:25 in the sense “to throw.” It is used in Exodus 7 times: 4:25; 12:22; 19:12-13; 29:37; 30:29. The verb “to strike” (ver. 23) was used earlier at 8:2. This verb “to pass over” was used earlier at 12:13; it is related to the festival “Passover.” The participle “the destroying one” was seen earlier at verse 13. This is its last use in Exodus. “Indefinitely” (ver. 24) was seen earlier at 3:15 and 12:14, 17. It is often translated “forever” but the word literally means an “indefinite” period of time. This idea of “indefinite” is clearly relevant here because the Passover celebration was not a *permanent* celebration since it was brought to its completion in Jesus Christ (John 1:29; 1 Cor. 5:7). “Service” (ver. 25) was used earlier: 2:23; 5:9.

“Sacrifice” (ver. 27) was used earlier at 10:25. “To strike” was used earlier at 8:2 and 12:23. “To deliver” was used earlier at 2:19; 3:8, 22; 5:23; 6:6. “To kneel” or “to bow” was used earlier at 4:31. It will be used again at 34:8. “To worship” can mean to “to bow” but here is used in the more formal sense of “worship;” it was used this way at 4:31. “To command” (ver. 28) was used earlier at 1:22; 4:28.

ARCHAEOLOGY:

The “hyssop” plant (ver. 22) is believed to be a member of the mint family, perhaps marjoram. Its branches are close together which allows it to hold liquids, suitable for sprinkling on other objects. It was also used in other rituals: Lev. 14:4-7, 49-52; Num. 19:6, 18.

COMMENTARY:

Once he received this final mission from God, Moses called together the elders of Israel, who have not been seen since 4:29. This section details Moses’ obedience to the aforementioned instructions. In verse 21, Moses tells the leaders to obtain their lamb and slaughter it for the Passover. In verse 22, they are to take a branch of hyssop (perhaps marjoram) and dip the branch in a basin full of the blood of the lamb and sprinkle the blood on

the door frame and upper frame of the house. The Israelites are to stay inside the house once the celebration begins; they are not to leave the safety of that blood-sprinkled house.

The word “sprinkle” (ver. 22) is related to the word “plague” in 11:1. In other words, the Israelites “sprinkling” the blood on the door frame would save them from God’s “plague” of the death of the firstborn. The word “basin” could also refer to the “threshold” (Judges 19:27; Ezek. 43:8) so that the blood was sprinkled on all four parts of the doorway. However, the sentence is not written in a way that makes us think the blood was sprinkled on the “threshold.”

In verse 23, Moses informs the elders that Jehovah God will cross through the land of Egypt and “strike” Egypt, but when He sees the blood of the lamb on the door frames, then Jehovah will “pass over” that house and the “destroying one” will not enter their house to strike. In verse 24, Moses commands the elders to “keep” or “obey” the ordinance and keep it “indefinitely” as we have seen earlier: 12:14, 17, 24. Once they have celebrated their Passover, the Israelites will leave and they will enter the land promised to Abraham (ver. 25; see Gen. 15:17-21).

In verse 26, Moses anticipates that the celebration of the Passover will stimulate questions from the children. In verse 27, Moses repeats the fact that this celebration is a sacrifice of the “Passover to Jehovah” who “passed over” their houses when He struck the Egyptians and delivered them. In this way, the memory of the exodus will be perpetually celebrated among the Israelites. Then, as they had done at 4:31, they bowed and worshipped. Then, as was written frequently of Moses and Aaron (7:10, 20), the elders and Israel did just as Jehovah had commanded Moses (ver. 28). To emphasize the fact, Moses writes: “thus they did.”

APPLICATION:

Moses’ contemporaries - In 13:14, God will reiterate the importance of explaining to the next generation the significance of the Passover and the exodus from Egypt. See also 13:6-7; 16:4-15, 29-32; 23:15; 25:30; 29:2, 23, 32-34; 34:18, 28; 35:13; 39:36; 40:23. See also Deut. 6:7. Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread (the terms will often be used interchangeably) is one of the three festivals when God required Jewish men to assemble in a designated place: Exodus 23:14-15.

Later Jewish writers - Psalm 78:49 refers to “destroying angels” whom God used in Egypt. David will request God to cleanse him from sin with hyssop (Psa. 51:7); this is certainly a figure of speech with this Passover or other celebration in the background of the idea. A “destroying angel” is also found in 2 Sam. 24:16; 2 Kings 19:35; Psa. 78:49. Isaiah pictures the redeemer of sins in the form of a lamb (53:7).

NT writers - Because Jesus is the “Lamb” which takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29, 36), NT theology relates directly to the Passover feast. It was during the celebration of the Passover that Jesus chose to take two of its actions (eating unleavened bread and drinking the juice of the grape) and used them as emblems of His own blood and body in His death, burial, and resurrection. Through this action, He created the “Lord’s Supper:” Matt. 26:17-19; Mark 14:12-16; Luke 22:14-20. John also pictures Jesus as the “Passover Lamb” in other passages: John 19:14, 31-33, 42. Luke shows that Jesus is the fulfillment of the “lamb” imagery, specifically from Isaiah 53:7 (Acts 8:32). The book of Revelation uses “lamb” 32 times, all but one refers to Jesus Christ.

TRANSLATION - 12:29-36:

29 And it happened in the middle of the night that Jehovah struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, the firstborn of Pharaoh, the one sitting on the throne until the firstborn of the captives who [are] in the house of the pit and all the firstborn of the cattle. **30** And Pharaoh arose in that night and all his servants and all Egypt because there was a great cry in Egypt because there was not a house where there was not there death. **31** And he called to Moses and to Aaron in the night and said, “Arise, go up from the middle of my people, both you and

the sons of Israel. Go and serve Jehovah as you said. **32** Both your flocks and your cattle, take just as you have said and go and bless even me.”

33 And Egyptians urged the people to hurry to send them from the land because they said, “All of us [are] dead!” **34** And the people raised their dough, not yet it was leavened from their kneading bowls being bound in their clothes, on their shoulders. **35** And the sons of Israel did according to the word of Moses and asked the Egyptians for vessels of silver and vessels of gold and clothing. **36** Then Jehovah gave grace for the people in the eyes of the Egyptians and they were asked and they plundered the Egyptians.

HEBREW WORDS:

“Captives” (ver. 29) is used only here in Exodus, out of 48 uses. “Cry” (ver. 30) was used earlier at 3:7, 9; 11:6. “Serve” (ver. 31) is a key verb in Exodus; see 1:13-14; 3:12. “To bless” (ver. 32) is used 327 times in the OT, making it one of the most used verbs. This is its first use in Exodus; it will be used at 20:11, 24; 23:25; 39:43. It was used in Genesis 65 times. “To urge” (ver. 33) was used at 4:4, 21. This verb is often translated “to harden” (see 4:21; 7:13, 22; 8:15). While Pharaoh’s heart was hardened against letting Israel go, now it is “hardened” to force Israel to leave. “To hurry” was used earlier at 2:18; 10:16. “Dough” (ver. 34) is used five times in the OT: Exo. 12:34, 39; 2 Sam. 13:8; Jer. 7:18; Hosea 7:4. The verb “to be leavened” is used here; 12:39; Hosea 7:4; Ps. 73:21. “Kneading bowls” was used earlier at 7:28. After this text, it will only be used again at Deut. 28:5, 17. “To be bound” is used only here in Exodus, out of 47 times. “To plunder” (ver. 36) was used earlier at 2:19; 3:8, 22; 5:23; 6:6.

COMMENTARY:

This paragraph records the actual fulfillment of the death of the firstborn. As we have noted at the beginning of each of the previous nine plagues, the plagues were the battlegrounds in the war between Jehovah God and the gods of the Egyptians (12:12; Num. 33:4). This is plague #10. In this plague, Jehovah attacks the embodiment of all the other plagues: the Pharaoh himself. He was believed to be a product of the gods and a god himself. For Jehovah to strike Pharaoh’s firstborn is to show that Jehovah God was, in fact, more powerful than Pharaoh and his whole pantheon of gods.

In the middle of the night, Jehovah struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the Pharaoh in the highest position in the land (sitting on the throne) to the captives who were in prison, in the pit, including the cattle. No doubt Egyptians lost sleep waiting to see if Jehovah would fulfill His prediction; no doubt many awoke to see how their firstborn was doing. At midnight, however, Jehovah God struck and the wailing was immense. There was a “great cry” in Egypt because there was not a house where there was not death (ver. 30). The word “wailing” here is the same word God used of Israel’s reaction to Egypt, in 3:7, 9 (see also 11:6). It has been said that verse 30 indicates the “firstborn” had to include firstborn girls, not just boys, because there was not a house where there was not death. However, the statement could be hyperbole; it could also refer to the death of cattle or other animals, not just children; or it could mean the firstborn girls were also killed. The text is not clear.

Subsequently, Pharaoh called to Moses and Aaron in the night, violating his injunction against their subsequent appearances before him (see 10:27-29). Observe the series of imperatives Pharaoh fires at Moses in verses 31-32: “Arise! Go! Go! Serve! Take! Go! Bless!” Pharaoh is fearful and, likely, angry. He acknowledges the unity of the people by referring to them as “sons of Israel.” He also, finally, acknowledges the request Moses has had since the beginning: “Serve Jehovah as you said” (compare with 5:1-2). Finally, ironically, Pharaoh asks Moses to ask Jehovah to “bless” him. Jacob had also blessed his Pharaoh in Genesis 47:7, 10. But Jacob’s Pharaoh has a different character than this Pharaoh. He had asked Moses to intercede for him with Jehovah on multiple occasions: 8:8, 28, 30; 9:28; 10:17. Moses had told Pharaoh, apparently at the point in 10:28-29, that he would bow down before Moses and compel him and Israel to leave (11:8). We see that fulfilled here at 12:30-31.

Additionally, the Egyptians “urged” (the same word for “to harden” which was used earlier of Pharaohs’ heart) the Israelites to hurry, to send them from the land for they all feared their own deaths (ver. 33). So, the people took their dough which was without leaven from their kneading bowls and bound it up and threw it over their shoulders (ver. 34). Verse 35 denotes, again, the obedience of the children of Israel (see verse 28). Israel asked the Egyptians for vessels, equipment, perhaps jewelry of silver and gold, including clothing, and the Egyptians graciously gave Israel what they needed and asked for. God had told Moses twice this would happen (3:21-22; 11:2-3).

The score is: Jehovah God - 10; gods of Egypt - 0.

APPLICATION:

Moses’ contemporaries - Isn’t it interesting that the Law of Moses forbade Jews from hating the Egyptians: Deut. 23:7.

NT writers - The NT teaches Christians to use wisely what they see around them in the world, to use it for God’s glory: Luke 16:1-9.

TRANSLATION - 12:37-42:

37 Then the sons of Israel traveled from Ramses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand foot soldiers, not counting children. **38** But even a great mixture went up with them with flocks and cattle, very great property. **39** And they baked the dough which they had brought from Egypt, cakes of unleavened bread because it was not leavened because they were driven out from Egypt and were not able to delay and even provisions they did not make for them. **40** And the stay of the sons of Israel who stayed in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years. **41** And it was from the end of four hundred and thirty years, that it was in that exact day all the host of Jehovah went up from the land of Egypt. **42** A night of watchings it [was] to Jehovah to bring them up from the land of Egypt, that [was] that night to Jehovah, of watchings for all the sons of Israel for their generations.

HEBREW WORDS:

This is the first use of the word “to travel” (ver. 37) in Exodus. It was used frequently in Genesis. It will be used 146 times. It can be understood as “to march,” which is appropriate here, since the word “soldier” is also used in the verse. After this text, it will be used 11 more times in Exodus. “Foot” is used a dozen times but only here in Exodus. While it literally means “feet” or “legs,” here it suggests infantry or foot soldiers, since it is paired with the word for “mighty man” or “warrior.” This word has been used earlier at 10:11. “Children” was used earlier at 10:10, 24. This is its last use in Exodus. “Mixture” (ver. 38) is used 11 times in the OT, mostly in Leviticus (9 times, entirely in chapter 13). This is its only use in Exodus. The other place is Nehemiah 13:3.

“To bake” (ver. 39) is used 25 times in the OT; in Exodus, it is at 12:39; 16:23. “Cakes” is used only here in Exodus, out of 7 uses. “Unleavened bread” was used at 12:8, 15, 17-18, 20. “To drive” or “to be driven” was used earlier at 2:17; 6:1; 10:11; 11:1. “To delay” is used only 10 times in the OT; this is its only use in Exodus. “Provision” is used 10 times as well, only here in Exodus. The word “stay” in verse 40 is related to the verb “to stay” in the same verse. “Hosts” (ver. 41) was used earlier at 6:26; 7:4; 12:17. It will be used again at 12:51.

REFERENCES AND ALLUSIONS TO GENESIS:

God had told Abraham that his descendants would be strangers in a foreign land for 400 years (Genesis 15:13). We see the fulfillment of that promise here.

ARCHAEOLOGY:

“Ramses” (ver. 37) was used earlier at Genesis 47:11 and Exodus 1:11. It will be used again, after this text, only at Numbers 33:3, 5. “Succoth” is used earlier as well, at Genesis 33:17. After this text, it will be used in Exodus only at 13:20. It is used 19 times in the OT.

COMMENTARY:

Verse 37 records the first section of Israel's journey out of Egypt into the Promised Land. They will not reach the promised land until the days of Joshua, recorded in the books of Deuteronomy and Joshua. Scholars do not know exactly where Ramses and Succoth are.

For many scholars, both "liberal" (who don't accept divine authorship of Exodus) and "conservative" (those who do), the large number of Hebrews at this stage of their history is too large. If the men number over 600,000, then the total nation of Israel could number as many as 3 million. These scholars either believe the Nile delta could not hold that many, or the land of Canaan does not reflect a Hebrew invasion of that number. It is true that the word translated "thousands" (see Exo. 18:21; Num. 10:36; 31:4-5; Joshua 7:3; 1 Sam. 23:23) could be translated as "clans" or various other options. For the idea of "cattle," see Deut. 7:13; 28:4, 18, 51; and "clans," see: Joshua 22:14; Judges 6:15; 1 Sam. 10:19; Isa. 60:22; Micah 5:2. For the idea of "divisions," see Num. 1:16; for "family," see Joshua 22:21, 30. For the translation of "ox," see Isa. 30:24; Psa. 8:7; and for "tribe," see Num. 10:4. Thus some scholars understand the word "thousands" as "military divisions" (or "clans") and suggest Moses simply says the fighting men numbered six hundred divisions, a number much smaller than the six hundred thousand normally understood.

However, it seems Moses is clear here and in 38:26 that the number referred to individuals, not to "clans." He is equally clear in Numbers 1:46-47; 2:32; 11:21; 26:51 (which liberal scholars attribute to a different author than the author of Exodus). They were growing exponentially, according to Exodus 1:7. As for the "criticisms" of the large number, it is based on mere speculation, not serious facts.

A "great mixture" (ver. 38) went out of Egypt, probably including many of those who had believed Moses' words in 9:20 (cf. Numbers 11:4). Just as Abraham had become rich while in Egypt (Genesis 20:14-16), here, Israel leaves Egypt with "very great property." They baked the dough, without leaven, which they had brought from Egypt (ver. 39).

Verse 40 challenges our understanding of the length of time Israel spent in Egypt. Its superficial reading says they stayed there 430 years. God promised Israel would be oppressed for four hundred years (Gen. 15:13), or "four generations" (15:16). It could be that God was giving an approximation; perhaps the 430 begins at that point while the "400 years" begins with Isaac's birth. Additionally, we have the "four generations" from Genesis 15:16: Levi, Kohath, Amram, and Moses.

However, in Galatians 3:17, Paul writes that the "Law" (of Moses; Exodus 20) came "430 years" after the promise given to Abraham (Gal. 3:16). Paul would then date the exodus 430 years after Abraham, not the whole time spent in Egypt (which would only be about 200-215 years). If Kohath was born *prior* to Levi's entrance into Egypt (Gen. 46:11), then this shortens the time period significantly. If we look at Exodus 12:40 closely, we see that Moses writes: "the stay of the sons of Israel, *who* stayed in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years." It could mean that Moses writes that the stay of Israel *outside of the Promised Land*, that is, those Israelites who stayed in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years. By this reading, Moses might have been including the time of the patriarchs in the "430 years." Indeed, that is how the LXX translates the verse (12:40): "and the settling of the sons of Israel, who settled in Egypt and in Canaan, [was] four hundred thirty years." The Jewish historian, Josephus, in *Antiquities of the Jews* (2.15.2), included the stay in Canaan within the 430 years, as does the SP.²

At the end of that 430 year period (ver. 41), whenever we *start* the timeframe, on the day God struck the firstborn and chose to bring Israel out of Egypt, *on that very day*, Israel came out of Egypt. That fateful night was a "night of watchings" to see the wrath of God displayed on Egypt and the grace of God displayed on Israel (ver. 42). It was that night that God brought Israel out of Egypt, a night for a memorial for the sons of Israel for future generations. No event

² See the Introduction for a discussion of the LXX and SP.

in the history of Israel carries as much significance for Israel as the exodus from Egypt. It was to the Israelite what the resurrection of Christ is to Christians.

APPLICATION:

Later Jewish writers - In Psalm 78:49, the psalmist will say that God sent a "band of destroying angels" against Egypt.

NT writers - The "mixed multitude" (ver. 38) anticipates the inclusion of Gentiles into the kingdom of God (Matt. 8:11). They will be included once they meet the same conditions proscribed for Jews: faith, repentance, and baptism into Christ (Acts 15:8-9; Acts 2:38).

TRANSLATION - 12:43-51:

43 Jehovah said to Moses and Aaron, "This [is] the ordinance of Passover, every son of a foreigner will not eat of it. **44** And every servant, a man, a property of silver you will circumcise him, then he will eat it. **45** The traveler and the hireling will not eat it. **46** In a single house it will be eaten; it will not be brought from the house, from the flesh outside and the bone will not be broken in it. **47** All the assembly of Israel will do this. **48** And if a traveler travels with you and does the Passover to Jehovah, circumcise him, every male and then he will approach to do it and he will be as a native of the land and every non-circumcised will not eat it. **49** One law will be for the native and for the traveler, he will travel among you."

50 So all the sons of Israel did just as Jehovah commanded Moses and Aaron; thus they did. **51** And it was in that exact day Jehovah brought out the sons of Israel from the land of Egypt by their hosts.

HEBREW WORDS:

For "ordinance" (ver. 43), see 12:14, 17. On "Passover," see 12:11, 21, 27. The word will be used again at 12:48; 34:25. This is the only use of "foreigner" in Exodus; it was used at Genesis 17:12, 27; 35:2, 4. It is used 36 times in the OT. This word "to circumcise" (ver. 44) was used extensively in Genesis 17 and Genesis 34. This is the only text (12:44, 48) in Exodus. The verb is used 32 times. "Hireling" (ver. 45) is used here and 22:15, out of 18 times. "To break" was used earlier at 9:25. "Assembly" (ver. 47) was used earlier at 12:3, 6, 19.

"To travel" (ver. 48) is related to the word for "traveler." The verb was used earlier at 6:4. The noun, often translated "foreigner" or "stranger," was used earlier at 2:22. "To approach" was used earlier at 3:5. It often denotes the idea of approaching God in worship. "Native" is used 17 times in the OT; it refers to a citizen. It is used in Exodus only in this context: 12:19, 48-49. "Non-circumcised" was used earlier at 6:12, 30. "Law" (ver. 49) is the Hebrew word *torah*. It was used once in Genesis (26:5) and will be used in Exodus at: 12:49; 13:9; 16:4, 28; 18:16, 20; 24:12. It will be used extensively in Deuteronomy (22 times), out of 223 uses. The word can mean "instruction, teaching, or custom." It comes from the verb "to teach." "To command" (ver. 51) was used earlier at 1:22. "Hosts" (ver. 51) was used earlier at 12:17, 41.

COMMENTARY:

This paragraph summarizes what has been said before and applies the Passover guidelines to those who are not Israelites. In verse 43, Jehovah states to Moses that the forthcoming regulations relate to the Passover feast. The foreigner or foreigner's son will not eat it (ver. 43). A servant who has been bought can eat it if he is circumcised (ver. 44). The traveler who is staying temporarily in Israel or the hireling cannot eat it (ver. 45).

The "traveler" could take grain to eat for the moment (Lev. 19:10; 23:22). He could certainly give (Deut. 14:29). He could celebrate the Sabbath year (Lev. 25:6). He could also benefit from the cities of refuge (Num. 35:15). He could not observe the Passover or Feast of Unleavened Bread if he had not been circumcised.

A single house will eat a single lamb, unless they are too few and need to add another small number (ver. 46). The meal will not be brought outside (ver. 46). It is also wrong to break a bone of the lamb. Scholars do not know why God forbade them to break the bones of the lamb

unless it indicated Israel would take too long to prepare the meal before they left Egypt. Otherwise, it is simply a picture of the fact that not a bone of Christ was broken when He was hung on the cross as our Passover Lamb (see below under “Application: NT Writers”).

The traveler must be circumcised if he wishes to eat the Passover (ver. 48). The key to taking the Passover is that the individual must be circumcised. The same law will apply to the Israelite as well as to any others who wish to engage in the Passover meal (ver. 49).

Verse 50 summarizes the obedience of the Israelites as we have seen earlier (12:28, 35). Also, to emphasize the obedience, Moses concludes the verse with: “thus they did.” Verse 51 states that it was on the night of the death of the firstborn, “that exact day,” that Jehovah brought Israel out of the land by their “hosts;” the term pictures Israel as an army. See our comments above at verse 17.

APPLICATION:

Moses’ contemporaries - For slavery laws in the Law of Moses, see: 21:1-17; Deut. 15:11-18.

NT writers - “Passover” will be used in the NT 29 times, most often in the events at the end of Christ’s life, before His crucifixion. Matthew uses the word three times: 26:2, 17-19. Mark, 5 times: 14:1, 12, 14, 16. Luke, 7 times: 2:41; 22:1, 7-8, 11, 13, 15. John, ten times: 2:13, 23; 6:4; 11:55; 12:1; 13:1; 18:28, 39; 19:14. Acts uses the word once: 12:4. 1 Corinthians once: 5:7. Hebrews uses the word once: 11:28. Since Jesus is our Passover Lamb (John 1:29), it is significant that none of His bones were broken at His crucifixion: John 19:36.

The Hebrew writer (11:28) alludes to the Passover event and the destroyer who passed over the Israelites because they acted “by faith.”