

Exodus 13:1-2 | The Lord said to Moses, ² “Consecrate to me all the firstborn. Whatever is the first to open the womb among the people of Israel, both of man and of beast, is mine.”

Exodus 13:3 | Then Moses said to the people, “Remember this day in which you came out from Egypt, out of the house of slavery, for by a strong hand the Lord brought you out from this place. No leavened bread shall be eaten.

Exodus 13:7-8 | Unleavened bread shall be eaten for seven days; no leavened bread shall be seen with you, and no leaven shall be seen with you in all your territory. ⁸ You shall tell your son on that day, ‘It is because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt.’

Exodus 13:11-16 | “When the Lord brings you into the land of the Canaanites, as he swore to you and your fathers, and shall give it to you, ¹² you shall set apart to the Lord all that first opens the womb. All the firstborn of your animals that are males shall be the Lord’s. ¹³ Every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb, or if you will not redeem it you shall break its neck. Every firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem. ¹⁴ And when in time to come your son asks you, ‘What does this mean?’ you shall say to him, ‘By a strong hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt, from the house of slavery. ¹⁵ For when Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the Lord killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of animals. Therefore I sacrifice to the Lord all the males that first open the womb, but all the firstborn of my sons I redeem.’ ¹⁶ It shall be as a mark on your hand or frontlets between your eyes, for by a strong hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt.”

Exodus 13:19-22 | Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for Joseph had made the sons of Israel solemnly swear, saying, “God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones with you from here.” ²⁰ And they moved on from Succoth and encamped at Etham, on the edge of the wilderness. ²¹ And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night. ²² The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night did not depart from before the people.

Exodus 12:1-28 | Remember & Follow

I have a theory about photographs. I will share it now. Photographs used to be about passing through time. They were a means of preserving a memory. Photographs are now about passing through space. We take a photo and immediately text it to people who aren’t here. Photographs are about sharing what is present with people who aren’t, rather than sharing the past with people who were there. We’re not a remembering people. In fact our relationship to the past is fundamentally a relationship of embarrassment. You can tell this when you pull out pictures from your past.

Our modern culture is one designed to erase the past as an encumbrance and celebrate the novel. This is an idiosyncrasy of our intellectual heritage but it is also a simple fact of being

human. We don't remember what we ought to remember. Right after the Exodus the main thing God desires for his people is that they remember his deliverance. In remembering his deliverance they are remembering who they are, they are becoming a people unto God.

1. Remember this Day

Exodus 13:1-2 | The Lord said to Moses, ² “Consecrate to me all the firstborn. Whatever is the first to open the womb among the people of Israel, both of man and of beast, is mine.”

God preserves their memory first by giving a requirement of consecrating all of their firstborn sons. The firstborn sons of man and beast. God makes clear the firstborn of Israel is mine. What this means is that the firstborn sons are to have sacrifices made on their behalf to the Lord so that they are set apart and spared.

Exodus 13:13 | Every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb, or if you will not redeem it you shall break its neck. Every firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem.

For an unclean animal like a donkey a clean animal would be offered in its place. The redemption price listed in Numbers 3 for a firstborn son is 5 shekels. In this pattern the Lord is staking a claim on his people, marking them as his. But he is also instituting this practice for the purpose of remembering their rescue from Egypt.

Exodus 13:14-15 | And when in time to come your son asks you, ‘What does this mean?’ you shall say to him, ‘By a strong hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt, from the house of slavery. ¹⁵ For when Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the Lord killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of animals. Therefore I sacrifice to the Lord all the males that first open the womb, but all the firstborn of my sons I redeem.’

One of the reasons for the practice is to remember their deliverance took place at the great cost of the firstborn sons of Egypt. This in fact gives understanding of precisely what happened on the Passover. The firstborn sons of Israel were redeemed under the blood of the lamb. It in effect means that the Lord has all the firstborn sons. But the ones that belong to him he will redeem. The firstborn sons of Egypt also belong to God in a sense, but not in the sense that Israel belongs to God. The distinction is the redemption.

2. Firstborn Sons

Exodus 12:33 | The Egyptians were urgent with the people to send them out of the land in haste. For they said, “We shall all be dead.”

The new orientation of Egypt towards the Israelites is not one of possession and oppression but fear and release. This sacred event at the exposure of the most real

becomes for the people an encounter with the most orienting. Their nation had been destroyed economically and agriculturally by the plagues, their religious stability had been undone as each of their gods had been humiliated. And the highest power they could appeal to in Pharaoh had proven himself impotent before the Lord. Their entire sense of themselves and their home had been completely reoriented. This is a conversion.

Likewise this happens for God's people as well. Whatever doubts they had, which perhaps had been mounting, as the plagues went on, were suddenly vanquished. Moses was not just causing more trouble for them, as many certainly thought. He was the deliverer sent by God, he'd been right all along. Therefore they head out. They take their dough while it is unleavened and they leave and they take the silver and gold ornaments they had received from the Egyptians.

Exodus 12:37-38 | And the people of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides women and children. ³⁸ A mixed multitude also went up with them, and very much livestock, both flocks and herds.

2 to 3 million Israelites leave Egypt. 70 entered. It is a huge march. And in it there is a surprise. It is not just Israelites that are leaving to follow Moses' God, it is a mixed multitude! Egyptians are leaving as well. Their flocks and herds are brought with them. You see this is a total reorientation. The Egyptians themselves are no longer orienting themselves towards Pharaoh but towards something higher, they are orienting towards the God of their slaves. The Exodus is a sacred event which re-oriented God's people towards God but also brought in a multitude of Egyptians under God as well.

Exodus 12:41-42 | At the end of 430 years, on that very day, all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt. ² It was a night of watching by the Lord, to bring them out of the land of Egypt; so this same night is a night of watching kept to the Lord by all the people of Israel throughout their generations

It has been 413 years since the Mayflower. The people of God had been sojourners for 430 years since God made his promise to Abraham. It is a bit of a riddle but the people whom they sojourned with have been Egyptian, the Philistines are of the same people as the offspring of Mizraim from whom the Egyptians came. Now this night becomes the defining orientation of Israel, and of those who make the exodus with them. 430 years are gone, there is a new tradition now.

All cultures and peoples have a highest orientation. A most real story by which they organize themselves. But there is a highest and most true story. There is a true God and a true morality. His true judgement is coming. We ought to be organized by him. He is our highest orientation. God is a watchman.

3. A Wandering God

Exodus 12:43 | And the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, “This is the statute of the Passover: no foreigner shall eat of it,

The shape of the people has now totally transformed. The passover meal is their central public right which organizes the community. But this is no local deity. God is not merely the God of the Israelites, although he has placed his covenantal love upon them in a unique way, he is the God of all people. You see what has happened. It is precisely what God promised to Abraham he is doing for the Israelites.

Genesis 12:1-3 | “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. ² And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

He has cursed those who cursed them, and he will bless those who bless them, and all the families of the earth will be blessed in them. So what does this mean for the foreigner who is prohibited from the meal which centrally organizes the community of God. They must convert. And they can.

Exodus 12:48-49 | If a stranger shall sojourn with you and would keep the Passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised. Then he may come near and keep it; he shall be as a native of the land. But no uncircumcised person shall eat of it. ⁴⁹There shall be one law for the native and for the stranger who sojourns among you.”

The mixed multitude who came out will convert and be circumcised and come into full participation with the people of God. Don’t you see, the blessing was always through the Israelites, and it was always for the whole world. That is because the God of Israel is *the* true God. There is a real true God over all the nations of the world, he is the most real, the most orienting, the most transformative. He is the one who accomplishes the truly sacred events. This is why no law of any nation can be legitimate while it stands in opposition to God’s law. Participation then means assimilating into the people of God by being transformed in who you are. Circumcision says you are covenant people. God says I am your God you are my people.

Here is our sacred event. Not many sons dying but one son, the Son of God Jesus Christ. But more than dying, he rose again from the dead. This is the most real event. From it our lives are reoriented to God by his grace, which set us free from our slavery to sin. He sent his Spirit so that our lives might be transformed into his likeness. And he invites us, his enemies to eat in fellowship with one another and with him.

