

Week 5: Passover - Exodus Ch 12-13

Pre-Work

- What did the first Passover mean to the ancient Israelites, and how did the later biblical prophets reflect on this original meaning? One aspect of Passover's meaning was "protection". Please watch the following video from the Bible Project to understand this idea better before class.

<https://bibleproject.com/videos/what-is-passover/>

- Please read Exodus 12-13 in the translation of your choice. What stands out to you in these chapters? What questions arise in your mind when you read them?

Class Notes

- Misconceptions about salvation in the OT
- Was Israel rescued *before* the giving of the Law or *after*?
- Was Israel saved because they were righteous and holy?

12 Now the LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, ² “This month shall be the beginning of months for you; it is to be the first month of the year for you.

Western Calendar Month	Jewish Calendar Month	Feasts
September-October	Tishrei	Trumpets, Day of Atonement, Tabernacles
October-November	Cheshvan	
November-December	Kislev	
December-January	Tevet	
January-February	Shevat	
February-March	Adar	
March -April	Nisan	Passover, Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits
April-May	Iyar	
May-June	Sivan	Shavuot/ Pentecost
June-July	Timmuz	
July-August	Av	
August-September	Elul	
Weekly	(Every 7th Day)	Sabbath

- Rosh Hashana, in the Seventh month of Tishrei, is the civil New Year (Lev 23:24-25 and Numbers 29:1-6). Nisan, the Seventh month from Tishrei, is the religious New Year

³ Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying, ‘On the tenth of this month they are, each one, to take a lamb for themselves, according to the fathers’ households, a lamb for each household.

- The judgment will come upon the firstborn in each household, so to the ones who would be protected from judgment, an innocent lamb

⁴ Now if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his neighbor nearest to his house are to take one according to the number of persons *in them*; in proportion to what each one should eat, you are to divide the lamb.

- Accommodation - if a household was too small to eat the entire lamb, share with neighbors. Yahweh’s orders about one lamb per household are not to be followed in letter (v3), but in spirit (v4)

⁵ Your lamb shall be an unblemished male a year old; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats.

- 1 year lamb or kid/goat is fully grown
- Unblemished not for the quality of the meal, but for ritual purity

⁶ You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month, then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel is to slaughter it at twilight.

- Twilight is both the end of the old day and the beginning of the new day (in biblical reckoning, the new day begins at full sunset)
- “Liminal time”

⁷ Moreover, they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses in which they eat it.

- The shed blood of an innocent lamb is the image of Yahweh’s protection of those to whom it is applied
- Doorposts and lintel - “liminal space”

⁸ They shall eat the flesh that *same* night, roasted with fire, and they shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. ⁹ Do not eat any of it raw or boiled at all with water, but rather roasted with fire, *both* its head and its legs along with its entrails. ¹⁰ And you shall not leave any of it over until morning, but whatever is left of it until morning, you shall completely burn with fire. ¹¹ Now you shall eat it in this way: *with your garment*

belted around your waist, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in a hurry—it is the LORD’S Passover.

- Everything about these instructions describes a meal eaten in haste, in anticipation of a long journey very soon, with no time or storage to spare
 - No long simmering/boiling
 - No waiting for the dough to rise
 - Bitter herbs easy to gather around the neighborhood
 - Dressed as if eating on the run
- This is a show of faith, as Pharaoh was not yet letting the people go, and the 10th plague had not even occurred

¹² For I will go through the land of Egypt on that night, and fatally strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the human *firstborn* to animals; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments—I am the LORD. ¹³ The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live; and when I see the blood I will pass over you, and no plague will come upon you to destroy *you* when I strike the land of Egypt.

- The tenth plague is the “final word” that no Egyptian gods have power over Yahweh. Various households in Egypt may have put one of a multitude of gods in the primary role of protection to their household. By each household being struck, the Egyptians would know no one but Yahweh was able to protect

¹⁴ ‘Now this day shall be a memorial to you, and you shall celebrate it *as* a feast to the LORD; throughout your generations you are to celebrate it *as* a permanent ordinance. ¹⁵ For seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, but on the first day you shall remove dough with yeast from your houses; for whoever eats anything with yeast from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel. ¹⁶ And on the first day you shall have a holy assembly, and *another* holy assembly on the seventh day; no work at all shall be done on them, except for what must be eaten by every person—that alone may be prepared by you. ¹⁷ You shall also keep the *Feast of Unleavened Bread*, for on this very day I brought your multitudes out of the land of Egypt; therefore you shall keep this day throughout your generations as a permanent ordinance. ¹⁸ In the first *month*, on the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread, until the twenty-first day of the month at evening. ¹⁹ For seven days there shall be no dough with yeast found in your houses; for whoever eats anything with yeast, that person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether *he is* a stranger or a native of the land. ²⁰ You shall not eat anything with yeast; in all your dwellings you shall eat unleavened bread.’”

- The Feast of Unleavened Bread signified the *hurried deliverance* of Israel from Egyptian oppression.

²¹ Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel and said to them, “Go and take for yourselves lambs according to your families, and slaughter the Passover *lamb*. ²² And you shall take a bunch of hyssop and dip it in the blood which is in the basin, and apply some of the blood that is in the basin to the lintel and the two doorposts; and none of you shall go outside the door of his house until morning.

- These are the same leaders who blamed Moses and Aaron for Pharaoh’s oppression by making them gather stubble
- The lamb is killed for the sake of saving people
- Hyssop (marjoram) - a natural paintbrush hereafter associated with cleansing
- Blood symbolically acts like a cleaning agent to create sacred space

““It is thus not irrelevant that the substance used is blood. The sign is not simply a “marker,” as if any colorful substance that caught the eye would do (contra Sarna, p. 92). In the blood was life; it is the vitality of the living (Lev. 17:11, 14; cf. Deut. 12:23; Ps. 72:14). It is a sign of life, but not a symbol in a weak sense. The blood was the life of creation given for the people who lived in the marked houses. It is the life given that provides the life for Israel, not simply the blood as a marker of protection. The blood of creation is shed so that Israel’s blood might be spared. But it has this power because of the word of God that so proclaims its significance. God uses creation to achieve redemption.” ~Terence Fretheim, *Exodus*

²³ For the LORD will pass through to strike the Egyptians; but when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the LORD will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to come in to your houses to strike *you*. ²⁴ And you shall keep this event as an ordinance for you and your children forever. ²⁵ When you enter the land which the LORD will give you, as He has promised, you shall keep this rite. ²⁶ And when your children say to you, ‘What does this rite mean to you?’ ²⁷ then you shall say, ‘It is a Passover sacrifice to the LORD because He passed over the houses of the sons of Israel in Egypt when He struck the Egyptians, but spared our homes.’” And the people bowed low and worshiped.

- Pass over/ protect
- The Lord does vs. the Lord allows in biblical perspective
- Must explain the meaning of the ritual to future generations: the blood of the lamb will lead to life in a world of death

28 Then the sons of Israel went and did so; just as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did.

29 Now it came about at midnight that the LORD struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of cattle. **30** And Pharaoh got up in the night, he and all his servants and all the Egyptians, and there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was no home where there was not someone dead. **31** Then he called for Moses and Aaron at night and said, “Rise up, get out from among my people, both you and the sons of Israel; and go, worship the LORD, as you have said. **32** Take both your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and go, and bless me also.”

33 The Egyptians urged the people, to send them out of the land in a hurry, for they said, “We will all be dead.” **34** So the people took their dough before it was leavened, *with* their kneading bowls bound up in the clothes on their shoulders.

35 Now the sons of Israel had done according to the word of Moses, for they had requested from the Egyptians articles of silver and articles of gold, and clothing; **36** and the LORD had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have their request. Therefore they plundered the Egyptians.

- Pharaoh has surrendered, and the Egyptians very much hurried them along
- The “plunder” was recompense for generations of enslavement

37 Now the sons of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, aside from children.

- Thousand “eleph” - usually means the cardinal number 1,000, sometimes means “clan”, family, military unit/division

38 A mixed multitude also went up with them, along with flocks and herds, a very large number of livestock.

- The people of the Exodus were not just descendants of Abraham, but an ethnically diverse group that included the families of the earth and very likely Egyptians
- Animals were a part of the Exodus

39 And they baked the dough which they had brought out of Egypt into cakes of unleavened bread. For it had no yeast, since they were driven out of Egypt and could not delay, nor had they prepared any provisions for themselves.

40 Now the time that the sons of Israel had lived in Egypt was 430 years. 41 And at the end of 430 years, on this very day, all the multitudes of the LORD departed from the land of Egypt.

42 It is a night to be observed for the LORD, for having brought them out of the land of Egypt; this night is for the LORD, to be observed by all the sons of Israel throughout their generations.

43 And the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, “This is the ordinance of the Passover: no foreigner is to eat it; 44 but *as for* every slave that someone has purchased with money, after you have circumcised him, then he may eat it. 45 A stranger or a hired worker shall not eat it. 46 It is to be eaten in a single house; you are not to bring any of the meat outside of the house, nor are you to break any bone of it. 47 All the congregation of Israel are to celebrate this. 48 But if a stranger resides with you and celebrates the Passover to the LORD, all of his males are to be circumcised, and then he shall come near to celebrate it; and he shall be like a native of the land. But no uncircumcised male may eat it. 49 The same law shall apply to the native as to the stranger who resides among you.”

50 Then all the sons of Israel did so; they did just as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron. 51 And on that very day the LORD brought the sons of Israel out of the land of Egypt according to their multitudes

- Non-Israelites are permitted to participate in Passover if they come under the Covenant, symbolized by male circumcision. (Ancient Egyptians also practiced circumcision)

13 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ² “Sanctify to Me every firstborn, the firstborn of every womb among the sons of Israel, among people and animals *alike*; it belongs to Me.”

³ And Moses said to the people, “Remember this day in which you departed from Egypt, from the house of slavery; for by a powerful hand the LORD brought you out from this place. And nothing with yeast shall be eaten. ⁴ On this day in the month of Abib, you are about to go out *from here*. ⁵ And it shall be when the LORD brings you to the land of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite, which He swore to your fathers to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey, that you shall perform this rite in this month. ⁶ For seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a feast to the LORD. ⁷ Unleavened bread shall be eaten throughout the seven days; and nothing with yeast shall be seen among you, nor shall any dough with yeast be seen among you in all your borders. ⁸ And you shall tell your son on that day, saying, ‘It is because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt.’ ⁹ And it shall serve as a sign to you on your hand, and as a reminder on your forehead, that the

law of the LORD may be in your mouth; for with a powerful hand the LORD brought you out of Egypt.¹⁰ Therefore, you shall keep this ordinance at its appointed time from year to year.

¹¹“Now when the LORD brings you to the land of the Canaanite, as He swore to you and to your fathers, and gives it to you, ¹²you shall devote to the LORD every firstborn of a womb, and every firstborn offspring of an animal that you own; the males belong to the LORD. ¹³But every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb, but if you do not redeem *it*, then you shall break its neck; and every firstborn among your sons you shall redeem. ¹⁴And it shall be when your son asks you in time to come, saying, ‘What is this?’ then you shall say to him, ‘With a powerful hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, from the house of slavery. ¹⁵And it came about, when Pharaoh was stubborn about letting us go, that the LORD put to death every firstborn in the land of Egypt, from human firstborns to animal firstborns. Therefore, I sacrifice to the LORD the males, every firstborn of a womb, but every firstborn of my sons I redeem.’ ¹⁶So it shall serve as a sign on your hand and as phylacteries on your forehead, for with a powerful hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt.”

- The firstborn of every animal is a gift that goes up to God; the firstborn of every human is redeemed from God. The ideal of the firstborn, rather than the ancient concept of entitlement, is to be reworked into *divine dedication, sacrifice, and redemption* - pointing ultimately to the firstborn of all creation

¹⁷Now when Pharaoh had let the people go, God did not lead them by the way of the land of the Philistines, even though it was near; for God said, “The people might change their minds when they see war, and return to Egypt.”

- God’s guidance for the first stage of the journey was not about efficiency and time management, but about mitigating the risk of their failure. This principle should be in the reader’s mind for the rest of the story: although God will not make failure impossible, He intends to make their failure more difficult

¹⁸Therefore God led the people around by way of the wilderness to the Red Sea; and the sons of Israel went up in battle formation from the land of Egypt. ¹⁹And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for he had made the sons of Israel solemnly swear, saying, “God will certainly take care of you, and you shall carry my bones from here with you.”²⁰ Then they set out from Succoth and camped in Etham, on the edge of the wilderness.

- This is a connection to the Joseph narratives in Genesis and closes the loop that began with Joseph being trafficked into Egypt by his own brothers

²¹And the LORD was going before them in a pillar of cloud by day to lead them on the way, and in a pillar of fire by night to give them light, so that they might travel by day and by night. ²²He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from the presence of the people.

- This points to the Garden, when God was present day and night with humans. The deliverance from Egypt thus becomes a “wifi hotspot to heaven” as Yahweh Himself was present with the people undergoing salvation.
- They have been saved. But now they must be baptized...

Reflections