

Exodus 12:1-13. *Time begins; redemption manifested; the blood covers.* Even after nine signs of destruction, Pharaoh continued to ignore the work of the Lord God Yahweh. And so, he was warned of the last, the tenth sign of destruction—the death of all the firstborn of Egypt. To commemorate this great event, Moses & Aaron were instructed by the Lord God to assemble the people and tell them—

Your calendar begins anew—this month will be now be your first month.

On the tenth day of this first month a carefully chosen, one-year old, perfect lamb or goat would be slaughtered on the fourteenth day of the month, at twilight. (Note: if a household is too small to have such a lamb/goat, then the nearest neighbor will share. You are to figure out how much lamb/goat will be needed.)

Some of the blood is to be put on the side and top of the doorframes of their homes where the lamb/goat is to be eaten.

Roast the meat over a fire, along with bitter herbs;⁵ use bread made with no yeast. Do not eat the meat raw or boiled—eat it all; don't leave any for the morning. If there is some left, burn it.

When you eat, do so with your cloak tucked under your belt—sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. Eat quickly, for it is the Lord God Yahweh's Passover.

On this very night I will pass over Egypt and kill every firstborn—both people and animals—and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the I AM. That blood? It will be a sign⁶ for you on

EXODUS 12:1-13

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt, ²"This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year. ³Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb [or baby goat] for his family, one for each household. ⁴If any household is too small for a whole lamb, they must share one with their nearest neighbor, having taken into account the number of people there are. You are to determine the amount of lamb needed in accordance with what each person will eat. ⁵The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats. ⁶Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the people of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight. ⁷Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs. ⁸That same night they are to eat the meat roasted over the fire, along with bitter herbs, and bread made without yeast. ⁹Do not eat the meat raw or cooked in water, but roast it over the fire—head, legs and inner parts. ¹⁰Do not leave any of it till morning; if some is left till morning, you must burn it. ¹¹This is how you are to eat it: with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste; it is the LORD's Passover. ¹²"On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn—both men and animals—and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD. ¹³The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.

⁵Endive, chicory and other bitter-tasting plants are indigenous to Egypt. Eating them would recall the bitter years of servitude there (see Exodus 1:14).

⁶Just as the plagues were miraculous signs of judgment on Pharaoh and his people (see Exodus 8:23), so the Lord's "passing over" the Israelites who placed themselves under the sign of blood was a pledge of God's mercy.

the houses where you are. When I see the blood I will pass over you. No plague of destruction will touch you when I strike Egypt.

- Q Why did Pharaoh not listen to Moses and his warnings, especially about the death of the firstborn?
- Q Why would the Lord God begin a new calendar? And require the tenth day of the first month (*Nisan* as it was to be later known) be set aside for lamb/goat selection?
- Q Who kills the firstborn sons (11:5) of people and animals in Egypt? Why the firstborn? [Hint: who is now, with Kate's third pregnancy, 5th in line for the British throne?]
- Q Why was this lamb/goat with all its potential to be sacrificed? [Hint see see Hebrews 9:22; 1John 1:7]
- Q Why were we instructed to eat bitter herbs? Put blood on the doorframes? Bread without yeast? Burn the remainder? Be baptized?
- Q Why the tucked in cloak? Sandals on? Staff in hand? [Hint: See Luke 12:35-40; Matthew 25:1-13]

12:2 *This month is . . . the first month.* The inauguration of the religious calendar in Israel. In the ancient Near East, new year festivals normally coincided with the new season of life in nature. The designation of this month as Israel's religious New Year reminded Israel that her life as the people of God was grounded in God's redemptive act in the exodus. The Canaanite name for this month was Abib (see 13:4; 23:15; 34:18; Dt 16:1), which means "young head of grain." Later the Babylonian name Nisan was used (see Ne 2:1; Est 3:7). Israel's agricultural calendar began in the fall (see note on 23:16), and during the monarchy it dominated the nation's civil calendar. Both calendars (civil and religious) existed side by side until after the exile. Judaism today uses only the calendar that begins in the fall.

12:5 *animals . . . without defect.* See Leviticus 22:18-25. Similarly, Jesus the Christ was also described like "a lamb without blemish or defect" (1Peter 1:19).

12:6 *at twilight.* Lit. "between the two evenings," an idiom meaning either (1) between the decline of the sun and sunset, or (2) between sunset and nightfall—which has given rise to disputes about when the Sabbath and other holy days begin.

12:7 *blood.* Symbolizes a sacrifice offered as a substitute, one life laid down for another (see Lev 17:11). Thus we escaped the judgment about to fall on Egypt only through the mediation of a sacrifice (see Hebrews 9:22; 1John 1:7).

12:8 *bread made without yeast.* Reflecting the haste with which the people left Egypt (see vv. 11,39; Dt 16:3).

12:9 *roast it . . . head, legs and inner parts.* The method wandering shepherds used to cook meat.

12:12 *judgment on all the gods of Egypt.* Some had already been judged (see 7:19; 8:2; 9:3; 10:21), and now all would be:

- (1) They would be shown to be powerless to deliver from the impending slaughter, and
- (2) many animals sacred to the gods would be killed.

12:13 *sign.* Just as the plagues were miraculous signs of judgment on Pharaoh and his people (see 8:23), so the Lord's "passing over" the Israelites who placed themselves under the sign of blood was a pledge of God's mercy.

12:14 *celebrate it as . . . a lasting ordinance.* Frequent references to Passover observance occur in the rest of Scripture (see Numbers 9:1-5; Joshua 5:10; 2Kings 23:21-23; 2Chronicles 30:1-27; 35:1-19; Ezra 6:19-22; Luke 2:41-43; John 2:13,23; 6:4; 11:55-12:1). The ordinance is still kept by orthodox Jewish believers today and is the foundation for Christian believers' celebration of "Communion."

12:15 *remove the yeast from your houses.* Yeast later was often used as a symbol of sin, such as "hypocrisy" (Luke 12:1) or "malice and wickedness" (1Corinthians 5:8). Before celebrating Passover, the observant Jewish believer today conducts a systematic (often symbolic) search of his house to remove every crumb of leavened bread that might be there (see v. 19).

⁷Adapted, corrected, and revised by D. Thomas Porter from Compton's Interactive NIV © 1996.

cut off from Israel. Removed from the covenant people by execution (see, e.g., 31:14; Lev 20:2-3) or banishment. See also Genesis 17:14.

12:17 *Feast of Unleavened Bread.* Began with the Passover meal and continued for seven days (see vv. 18-19; see also Mark 14:12).

12:21 *Passover lamb.* Jesus is the "Passover lamb" referenced in 1 Corinthians 5:7, sacrificed "once for all" (Hebrews 7:27) to demonstrate His mercy.

12:22 *hyssop.* Here probably refers to an aromatic plant (*Origanum maru*) of the mint family with a straight stalk (see John 19:29) and white flowers. The hairy surface of its leaves and branches held liquids well and made it suitable as a sprinkling device for use in purification rituals (see Lev 14:4,6,49,51-52; Nu 19:6,18; Heb 9:19; see also Psalm 51:7 we studied last month).



dip it into the blood. Today at Passover meals a sprig of parsley or other plant is dipped in salt water to symbolize the lowly diet and our tears during our time of slavery.

12:23 *the destroyer.* In Psalm 78:49 the agent of God's wrath against the Egyptians is described as "a band of destroying angels." God often used angels to bring destructive plagues (see 2Sa 24:15-16; 2Ki 19:35; see also 1Co 10:10, a reference to Nu 16:41-49). But, here and elsewhere (12:12 & 12:13), it is the Lord God Yahweh who kills.

12:26 *your children ask you, 'What does this ceremony mean to you?'* See 13:14. The Passover was to be observed as a memorial feast commemorating our redemption and appropriating it anew. As observed today, it includes the asking of similar questions by the youngest child present.

12:31 *Pharaoh summoned Moses.* Though he had sworn never again to grant Moses an audience (see 10:28), Pharaoh now summons Moses (and Aaron) into his presence.

12:35-36 See 3:21-22; 11:2-3.

12:37 *journeyed from Rameses.* See 1:11; see also Genesis 47:11. The Israelite departure took place "the day after the Passover" (Numbers 33:3). *Succoth.* Probably modern Tell el-Maskhutah in the Wadi Tumeilat, west of the Bitter Lakes. *about six hundred thousand men.* A round number for 603,550 (see Exodus 38:26).

12:38 *many other people.* Possibly including such Egyptians as those mentioned in 9:20.

12:41 *430 years, to the very day.* See Genesis 15:13; Acts 7:6.

12:46 *Do not break any of the bones.* See Nu 9:12; Ps 34:20; quoted in John 19:36 in reference to Jesus.

12:48 *No uncircumcised male may eat of it.* Only those consecrated to the Lord in covenant commitment could partake of Passover; only for them could it have its full meaning (see Genesis 17:9-14). Concerning participants in the Lord's Supper see 1 Corinthians 11:28-29—

A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself.