

LESSON 8

THE EXODUS

Exodus 12:1—19:2

Aim

To understand the importance of the Passover in the life of Israel and the importance of the Exodus in preparing Israel for the Covenant at Sinai.

The Passover and the Departure

Exodus 12:1—13:16

Rules for the Passover (12:1-13)

Three rites originated from the Exodus: the Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and the dedication of the first-born to Yahweh. The Feast of Unleavened Bread was derived perhaps from the feast for which Moses asked permission to make a three-days' journey into the wilderness (Exod. 5:3; 8:27). While the Passover was a family festival which was celebrated in the home, the Feast of Unleavened Bread was a community ritual and was eventually celebrated in Jerusalem.

The Passover was connected with the tenth plague. The plagues represented the conflict between Yahweh and Pharaoh. Whether Yahweh's power was great enough to defeat Pharaoh was yet to be determined. The previous nine plagues had sorely afflicted the Egyptians, but they had survived and had not yet recognized the power of the God of the slaves. The tenth plague was to be the decisive event.

The tenth plague and the Passover connected with it were so important that they marked the beginning of Israel's calendar. The first month was called Abib, the month of growing corn (March-April). Another system for reckoning the year was one which began in autumn at the end of the harvest. The Babylonian year also began in the spring and was called Nisan. Nisan instead of Abib is used in later writings (Neh. 2:1; Esth. 3:7).

Instructions were given to the families for the celebration of the Passover. On the tenth day of the first month, each family was to take a one-year-old male lamb or a kid without blemish and guard it carefully until the fourteenth day. If the family was small, two families were to join together in the Passover celebration. The nine days before the tenth day of the month may have symbolized the nine plagues.

The four days between the tenth and fourteenth were for the purpose of purification. On the fourteenth, between the two evenings (12:6)—either between sunset and the sight of the first star or between the beginning of the decline of the sun and sunset—the head of each household was to kill the lamb and spread some of the blood on the two door-posts and the lintel of his house. In early Babylonian culture, the purpose of placing blood on the door-posts was to ward off spirits and demons during the night. For Israel, the placing of the blood on the door-posts was an expression of faith (Heb. 11:28). The feast was to take place during the night, and all of the flesh was to be consumed either by those present or by fire. The meat was not to be eaten

How many Jewish rites originated from the Exodus?

They are:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

(Compare your answer with the text.)

The tenth plague on the Egyptians was to be decisive, and the rite connected with it is the _____

(Passover)

According to Hebrews 11:28 the placing of blood on the door-posts was an expression of _____

(faith)

raw because the eating of blood, in which the life-force was thought to reside, was forbidden. Unleavened bread indicated a speedy baking which was necessary on the last night in Egypt, and the absence of leaven allowed a supply of the bread to be kept longer for use on the journey. The bitter herbs were probably lettuce or chicory, pepperwort, snakeroot, and dandelion. Such herbs were used medicinally and perhaps were symbols of the bitterness of the Egyptian bondage. As the Israelites ate the meal, their robes were to be secured around their waists, their sandals were to be fastened, and staffs were to be in their hands. They were to be prepared for a hasty departure. At midnight the Lord would pass over the land, strike all the first-born of the Egyptians, and spare the Israelites where the blood had been placed on the lintels. The gods of Egypt would be exposed as powerless to protect the Egyptians.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread (12:14-20)

In the future Israel was to observe a seven-day celebration following the Passover night. The feast could begin in the evening since the Jewish day began at sunset. Leaven, which came to symbolize impurity and sin, was to be removed from the houses. On the first and seventh days, the worshippers were called together for the celebration of a festival. The preparation of food for man or beast was permitted on the festival day when it occurred on a weekday, but no other work could be done (12:16).

A recounting of the rules for the Passover (12:21-28)

Two additional instructions are given here: Moses was to give the elders the instructions for the Passover and hyssop was to be used in applying the blood to the door-posts. "The Lord will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you" (12:23) indicates that the death of the first-born was brought about by an agent of the Lord. For pagan nations, the blood on the door-posts would have served the purpose of warding off evil, but for the Israelites, it was the symbol of redemption.

The departure (12:29-42)

The death of the first-born of Egypt.—Although plagues which took the lives of children and animals were frequent in Egypt, the miraculous element in the tenth plague cannot be discounted because it affected only the first-born and did not affect the Israelites. Reports of the deaths of the first-born of men and cattle were given throughout Egypt. Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron in the middle of the night and commanded them to depart before another plague came upon the Egyptians. The Israelites had already made preparation for departure by borrowing Egyptian articles of silver and gold and having unleavened dough to take with them.

The number of Israelites departing and the length of their sojourn.—The number of 600,000 men, implying women and children in addition, is given for the Exodus. Notice is given that a mixed multitude, perhaps labourers other than Israelites, and a very large number of cattle were involved in the departure. Exodus 12:40 sets the length of the sojourn in Egypt at 430 years. Genesis 15:13 predicted the time to be 400 years. The Greek and Samaritan texts cut the period to 215 years. Genesis 15:16 and Exodus 6:13-20 suggest that four generations of Israelites were in Egypt from the time of Jacob to Moses. These different factors have left the length of time in Egypt uncertain.

Further rules for the Passover (Exod. 12:43-50)

Because of the mentioning of the mixed multitudes, the question arises concerning the conditions under which non-

<p>Unleavened bread indicated _____ _____ and also _____ _____ on the journey.</p> <p>(speedy baking, longer use)</p>
<p>The seven-day celebration following the Passover night is called the _____ of _____</p> <p>(Feast, Unleavened Bread)</p>
<p>For the Israelites, the blood on the door-posts was the symbol of _____</p> <p>(redemption)</p>
<p>The impact of the tenth plague was so great that Pharaoh commanded _____ immediately.</p> <p>(the Israelites to depart)</p>
<p>How many men left Egypt? _____</p> <p>(600,000)</p>

Israelites could eat the Passover meal. The general rule was that no foreigner who worshipped another god should be permitted to partake of the Passover. A hired servant who was temporarily with an Israelite would not be permitted to partake, but a slave who belonged to an Israelite might eat after being circumcised. Resident aliens might partake of the feast if the males were circumcised.

The dedication of the first-born (Exod. 13:1-16)

The law of the first-born is set forth fully in Numbers 3 and 18. According to Exodus 13:2 all the first-born were to be set apart to Yahweh. In Exodus 13:12, 22:29, and 34:19, only the first-born males were to be set apart. The first-born of men were to be ransomed (released for a payment), but the firstlings of clean animals were to be offered in sacrifice. The first-born of unclean animals could not be offered in sacrifice; therefore, they were to be redeemed with a lamb or killed. The meat of first-born animals offered in sacrifice provided much of the sustenance for the priests and Levites (Num. 18:17-20). First-born sons were not to be offered as burnt sacrifices after the manner of the heathen, but they were to be redeemed or ransomed.

The setting apart of the first-born was based on the slaying of the first-born of Egypt and the sparing of the first-born of Israel. The author of Exodus emphasized that the first-born belonged to the Lord.

The section on the consecration of the first-born is interrupted by a statement of regulations concerning unleavened bread (vv. 3-10). These regulations differ from previous instructions by making the chief day of the feast the seventh rather than the first. The holy convocation and ceasing of work are not mentioned in this passage. Again an emphasis is given to the instruction of children in the meaning of the observance. The eating of the Passover and unleavened bread may have been the extent of the memorial in the early days of Israel, but small scrolls of parchment placed in leather cases and tied to the forehead and the left arm later became symbols of devotion to the laws of God.

From Egypt to Sinai

Exodus 13:17-19:2

The route of the Exodus (13:17-18)

The main route from Egypt to Palestine began at Memphis, continued through the land of Rameses and northeast to the edge of the Mediterranean, and then went to Gaza. Although this was the northern coastal route and was the shortest way to Canaan, the author noted that God did not lead the Israelites by that route because of the danger of war (v. 17). The Canaanites already had chariots and were well armed. The Israelites had just gained their freedom and they had not shaken off their slave mentality nor acquired military skill.

The author of Exodus referred to the northern coastal route as "the way of the land of the Philistines." Archaeological evidence reveals that the Philistines did not settle the land until later. Perhaps a later editor inserted this description which had become familiar in his day.

The location of the crossing of the Red Sea has created much speculation. The Red Sea, or the Sea of Reeds (Papyrus Sea), may have been a stretch of water no longer existing between the Gulf of Suez and Timsah. The crossing may have been near modern Qantarah. Apparently an extension of the Gulf of Suez reached Lake Timsah at that time, and the Israelites walked across on dry land after the strong wind had pushed the waters back.

Divine guidance (13:19-22)

The pillar symbolized the presence of God as He led His peo-

Match the following concerning the length of time the Israelites stayed in Egypt.

- _____ 1. English Bible
- _____ 2. Greek and Samaritan texts

- a. 215 years
- b. 430 years

(1-b; 2-a)

In connection with the Passover, God requested dedication of the _____ of man and beast.

(first-born)

Besides eating the Passover and unleavened bread, what later became symbols of devotion to God's laws?

(Compare your answer with the text.)

The Israelites were not led of God by the usual route between Egypt and Canaan because

(of the danger of war)

ple. Fire was a manifestation of the nearness and presence of God (Exod. 3:2; 19:18, etc.). The author noted that the bones of Joseph were taken with the Israelites when they departed from Egypt.

Crossing the Red Sea (14:1-31)

The Israelites were instructed to change directions, probably because of a garrison before them. The author saw a second reason—to provide Pharaoh a final demonstration of the power of Yahweh. Pharaoh would conclude that the Israelites were wandering aimlessly in the land, and he would pursue them. Israel began on the northern route and then changed directions towards the region around Baal-Zephon on the coast. After crossing the sea, Israel went inland to the southern route. Pharaoh thought that the Israelites had been hemmed in by the wilderness and could be returned to slavery. Pharaoh used the chariots, the vehicles introduced to Egypt by the Hyksos, which made faster pursuit possible.

Upon seeing the approaching Egyptian army, the Israelites became frightened and rebuked Moses for leading them into trouble. Moses responded with faith, assuring that Yahweh would fight for them. If Pharaoh was leading the Egyptians, the Lord was leading the Israelites and would deliver them. The Lord would fight the battle for them (v. 14). Moses was instructed to lift his staff towards the sea, and the waters divided. The story of the Israelites' crossing on dry ground and the destruction of the Egyptians in the sea is well known. The little-known God of Israel would be honoured as the mighty God and Deliverer when He defeated the Egyptians. The pillar of cloud which had guided Israel through the day became known as the angel of God, and it protected them by standing between them and the Egyptians.

The miracle of deliverance pictures Yahweh as using the strong east wind, a natural phenomenon, to accomplish His purpose. The wind drove the waters back and dried the land for the crossing of the Israelites. When the pursuing Egyptians had reached the middle of the sea, Moses stretched his hand over the sea, the wind ceased, and the waters rolled back, drowning the Egyptians. Before their destruction, even the Egyptians recognized that the hand of the Lord was against them.

The songs of Moses and Miriam (15:1-21)

With the exception of the opening Hebrew word which is translated "I will sing" (NASB), Miriam's brief song (15:21) has the identical words of Moses' song in 15:1. The brevity of Miriam's song has led scholars to conclude that it was original and Moses' (vv. 1-18) was an elaboration of it. Moses' language gives the impression that it was sung somewhat later than the event. Whatever its date, its vividness and vigour make it one of the grandest specimens of Hebrew poetry. The song is a hymn of praise and is expressed in the first person (vv. 1-2). Verse 3 sets forth its theme. The anthropomorphic (attributing human form or personality to God) references to Yahweh's work of deliverance express beautifully the thankful praise of His people.

From the Red Sea to Elim (15:22-27)

After the crossing, the journey began in the wilderness. The wilderness was not desert but steppe¹ country, which provided pasturage for the herds and flocks. Sinai is identified with Gebel Musa at the southern end of the Sinai peninsula. The Israelites went along the way used by the Egyptians to the copper mines of

¹ A steppe is a level plain devoid of forest.

The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night symbolized

(God's presence)

Exodus 13:19 relates that Moses took the bones of _____ with him as he left Egypt.

Joseph)

Read in Exodus 14 the dramatic account of the Egyptians' pursuit of the Israelites. As you read, list the references in which God stated He would be glorified through this incident.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

(Exodus 14:4; 14:17; 14:18)

The pillar of cloud which had guided the Israelites by day became the _____ of God to protect them from the Egyptians.

(See Exodus 14:19-20.)

After crossing the Red Sea, the Israelites entered the _____ where they were for _____ years.

(wilderness, forty)

Sinai. Marah may have been the modern 'Ain Hawarah. The journey from the Sea of Reeds would have been through the wilderness of Shur via Marah to an oasis at Elim.

The water at Marah could not be drunk because of its bitterness. The people who recently had praised Yahweh were quick to murmur. The problem was overcome by casting a tree into the water. The Israelites came next to Elim, a place of twelve springs of water.

Manna and quails (16:1-36)

For centuries Mount Sinai has been identified with the granite range of mountains in the south-central part of the Sinai peninsula. Of the three mountain peaks (Gebel Serbal, Gebel Musa, and Gebel Katherina), Gebel Musa, "mountain of Moses," is the peak traditionally associated with Sinai-Horeb and the giving of the Law. Some scholars have argued against the traditional location because: (1) Exodus 19 is interpreted frequently as pointing to a volcano, but there are no volcanoes in the Sinai peninsula; (2) the Sinai peninsula lay within the jurisdiction of Pharaoh, causing the fugitive Israelites to avoid it; and, (3) Jethro's clan, the Midianites, lived east of the Gulf of Aqabah. A careful examination of Exodus 19 and 20 reveals that the phenomenon was a storm instead of an eruption of a volcano. It has been pointed out that the Egyptian troops were stationed at the Sinai peninsula only when the mines were in operation and the mines would have been closed at the time of the Israelite Exodus. The Midianites were Bedouin and could have travelled to distant ranges.

The Israelites departed from Elim and entered the Wilderness of Sin. This area is on the edge of the Sinai plateau and is barren. They idealized past circumstances and grumbled concerning the present. "The good old days" are never as good as the remembrance of them.

The Lord promised to rain bread from heaven and to send quails for food. Manna is still found and consists of small white drops, the secretions of certain insects. The sticky and sweet drops harden at night but quickly melt in the sun. They are composed of three basic kinds of sugar. Quails regularly appear on the western coast of the Sinai peninsula during the northern migration in the spring and the southern migration in the autumn. They fly in large flocks only a few feet above the ground and generally alight at night to rest.

The people were to gather a double portion on the sixth day, and they were not to gather on the seventh. This was a test of their obedience to the Sabbath law of not working on the seventh day. On the sixth day the people were to prepare for the seventh by cooking additional food. In disobedience some of the people went out to gather on the seventh day.

After the evaporation of the morning dew, manna was discovered all around. The word means "What is it?" and is still applied to the secretion of insects in the area. The nature of the substance is described in verse 31. The author noted that the Israelites ate the manna during the forty years of their wilderness journey.

Water from the rock (17:1-7)

Rephidim is about eight miles south of Gebel Musa.² When the people found no water there, they again found fault with

Write the description of manna found in Exodus 16:31.

Besides manna there were _____ for food.

(quails)

The people had an obedience test when the Lord instructed them to gather a double portion of manna on the _____ day so they would not have to gather on the _____ day.

(sixth, seventh)

² D. M. G. Stalker, "Exodus" in *Peake's Commentary on the Bible*, ed. by Matthew Black and H. H. Rowley (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Limited, 1962), p. 225.

Moses and doubted the power of Yahweh. Moses was instructed to use the rod, which had made the waters of the Nile undrinkable for the Egyptians, to provide water for the Israelites.

Moses asked, "Why do you contend with me? Why do you test the Lord?" The verbs of these questions correspond to the meanings of the two place names mentioned in verse 7, Massah (testing) and Meribah (contention). A parallel experience occurs in Numbers 20:2-13, but there only the name Meribah is mentioned. Various theories have been suggested concerning the relation of the two events.³

The conflict with the Amalekites (17:8-16)

The Amalekites were descendants of Esau and were generally located in the Negeb, southern Judah. Since they were Bedouin people, they may have travelled into other areas. They attacked the Israelites to prevent their seizure of an oasis near Rephidim. Some scholars believe the event is misplaced and should have come later in the history of Israel. The facts that Joshua appeared in the battle without introduction and that Moses was old and his hands were heavy (17:12) are used to support a later date. The lifting of the arms was an action designed to secure the desired victory. After the victory Moses was commanded to record the event in a book and to give Joshua the assurance that he would have victory over the Amalekites. An altar was erected and a victory offering was made.

The advice of Jethro (18:1-27)

Some scholars argue that this chapter is out of place because 17:8 locates the Israelites at Rephidim and 19:2 gives the account of their move from Rephidim to the Wilderness of Sinai. The Israelite camp was located already at Mount Sinai in 18:5. The arguments are inconclusive since the Israelites could have made journeys which are not recorded in the Scripture. Perhaps a stronger argument in favour of the misplacement of the chapter is the order of events given in a parallel account in Deuteronomy 1:6-18. The appointment of the officers in Deuteronomy came after Israel had been instructed to leave Mount Sinai (Deut. 1:6-8).

The last previous account of Zipporah was in Exodus 4:20, 24-26 where she was forced to circumcise one of her sons. At that time Zipporah was on her way to Egypt with Moses. In 18:1-27 she is pictured as being with her father Jethro and returning to Moses. The reason for Zipporah's return is not given.

Moses recounted to Jethro all that the Lord had done in delivering him from Pharaoh. In 18:10-12, Jethro led as the priest who offered sacrifices to the God who delivered Moses and the Israelites. This passage is the foundation of the Kenite hypothesis which proposes that Yahweh, originally the God of the Kenites, revealed Himself to Moses at the bush and, after triumphantly delivering the Israelites from Egypt, entered into covenant relationship with the Israelites as their God. The theory suggests that Jethro was a Kenite priest of Yahweh who initiated Aaron and the elders into the Yahweh cult. Not only did Jethro preside at his own shrine but the next day he proposed to Moses the arrangements for the judicial life of Israel.

Perhaps a more accurate view is to remember that the traditions of Abrahamic worship were perpetuated through both the descendants of Sarah and the descendants of Keturah. During Egyptian bondage, the suppression of the people may have

What were the Lord's instructions to Moses for securing water for the Israelites at Rephidim?

(Compare your answer with Exodus 17:5-6.)

True or False.

The Kenite theory proposes that Yahweh was God of the Kenites originally, then appeared to Moses and delivered the Israelites from Egypt. —

(True)

³ See G. Henton Davies, *Exodus: Introduction and Commentary*, pp. 142ff.

resulted in their neglect of Yahweh worship. The contact of Moses with Jethro may have exposed Moses to a more positive worship of Yahweh. At the burning bush a new and unique revelation was given by Yahweh to Moses and resulted in the deliverance of the Israelites. Moses' relation to Yahweh was richer and deeper than Yahweh's relation may have been to the Kenites. Unlike the Israelites, the Kenites did not understand that they were God's peculiarly chosen people.

The influence of Jethro on the Israelite's religion cannot be denied. After observing the heavy responsibilities which Moses carried in judging the people, Jethro suggested that Moses deal directly with only the more serious cases. He suggested that Moses continue to be the representative of the people before God and that he select dependable men who would assume the lesser responsibilities of judging the people. Some suits would have to be presented to God for divine intervention; these Moses would continue to handle. Moses heeded the advice of Jethro, and the judiciary matters were handled more efficiently. The advice for organization becomes more significant when one remembers the slave mentality of the people and their lack of organization.

Advice concerning organization for the judicial affairs of the people was given Moses by his father-in-law,

(Jethro)

Home Study Exercise

Basic activity (Levels 1, 2, and 3). After reading Exodus 12:1–19:2 and the study manual, do the following.

1. Name the three rites which originated from the Exodus. _____

2. Why was unleavened bread used? _____

3. How was the Feast of Unleavened Bread associated with the Passover? _____

4. The English Bible states that the Israelites were in Egypt _____ years, but the Septuagint and Samaritan Bibles state that they were there _____ years.
5. How was the law of the first-born related to the Passover? _____

6. What conclusion was Pharaoh expected to make when the Israelites changed direction during their escape? _____

7. How were the Israelites divinely guided and protected during their flight from the Egyptian army? _____

8. What is manna? _____
9. How were the people tested in their gathering of the manna? _____

10. What happened at Rephidim? _____

11. What is the Kenite hypothesis? _____

12. What did Jethro suggest to Moses? _____

Supplementary activity (Levels 2 and 3). Read pages 77–81 in *A Nation in the Making* and answer the following questions.

1. What is the difference in Abid and Nisan?
2. What possible contribution did Jethro make to the religion of Israel?

Advanced activity (Level 3). Read pages 107–150 in Davies' book and do the following.

1. Name the three rites originating from the Exodus and give one example of each. Show how they affected the life of Christ.
 2. What was the purpose of the blood painted on the door-posts?
 3. What are the difficulties that have been pointed out concerning the large number of 600,000 men in the Exodus?
 4. Why was leaven left out of the bread?
 5. Explain how God provided quails.
 6. What was Jethro's relation to Israel's worship?
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Seminar Discussion

1. What is the relation of the Passover to the Lord's Supper?
2. How did Moses' forty years with Jethro as a shepherd prepare him for the Exodus?
3. What contribution did Jethro the Midianite make to Yahweh worship?
4. How were natural phenomena used in the deliverance of the Israelites? Were there miraculous elements associated with the natural phenomena?
5. What is the importance of the Passover to Israel's history?
6. Evaluate the leadership ability of Moses in light of the people whom he led.