

In no wise! God cautioned Moses not to expect Pharaoh to come to his senses. All along God had foretold that Pharaoh would not listen, and that He would work his signs (miracles and plagues) in Egypt; and *then* after all that, "I will bring forth my hosts, my people, the children of Isreal" (7:4; 4:21).

There is a marvelous review and summary of the first nine plagues in the two verses Ex. 11:9-10.

The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart after plagues number six (boils), eight (locusts), nine (darkness), and after Israel departed (14:4, 8). See notes on 4:21 concerning this hardening.

Ex. 11:9-10 are truly transitional verses. From now on Moses will be dealing with Israel and not with Pharaoh.

### THE TEXT OF EXODUS TRANSLATION

**12** And Je-ho-vah spake unto Mo-ses and Aar-on in the land of E-gypt, saying, (2) This month shall be unto you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you. (3) Speak ye unto all the congregation of Is-ra-el, saying, In the tenth *day* of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for a household: (4) and if the household be too little for a lamb, then shall he and his neighbor next unto his house take one according to the number of the souls; according to every man's eating ye shall make your count for the lamb. (5) Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old: ye shall take it from the sheep, or from the goats: (6) and ye shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month; and the whole assembly of the congregation of Is-ra-el shall kill it at even. (7) And they shall take of the blood, and put it on the two side-posts and on the lintel, upon the houses wherein they shall eat it. (8) And they

shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; with bitter herbs they shall eat it. (9) Eat not of it raw, nor boiled at all with water, but roast with fire; its head with its legs and with the inwards thereof. (10) And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; but that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire. (11) And thus shall ye eat it: with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste; it is Je-ho-vah's passover. (12) For I will go through the land of E-gypt in that night, and will smite all the first-born in the land of E-gypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of E-gypt I will execute judgments: I am Je-ho-vah. (13) And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and there shall no plague be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of E-gypt. (14) And this day shall be unto you for a memorial, and ye shall keep it a feast to Je-ho-vah: throughout your generations ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever.

(15) Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses: for whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Is-ra-el. (16) And in the first day there shall be to you a holy convocation, and in the seventh day a holy convocation; no manner of work shall be done in them, save that which every man must eat, that only may be done by you. (17) And ye shall observe the *feast of* unleavened bread; for in this selfsame day have I brought your hosts out of the land of E-gypt: therefore shall ye observe this day throughout your generations by an ordinance for ever. (18) In the first *month*, on the fourteenth day of the month at even, ye shall eat unleavened bread, until the one and twentieth day of the month at even. (19) Seven days shall there be no leaven found in your houses: for whosoever eateth that which is leavened, that soul shall be cut off from the congregation of Is-ra-el, whether he be a sojourner, or one that is born in the land. (20) Ye shall eat nothing leavened; in all your habitations shall ye eat unleavened bread.

(21) Then Mo-ses called for all the elders of Is-ra-el, and said

unto them, Draw out, and take you lambs according to your families, and kill the passover. (22) And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two side-posts with the blood that is in the basin; and none of you shall go out of the door of his house until the morning. (23) For Je-ho-vah will pass through to smite the E-gyp-tians; and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side-posts, Je-ho-vah will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you. (24) And ye shall observe this thing for an ordinance to thee and to thy sons for ever. (25) And it shall come to pass, when ye are come to the land which Je-ho-vah will give you, according as he hath promised, that ye shall keep this service. (26) And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? (27) that ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of Je-ho-vah's passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Is-ra-el in E-gypt, when he smote the E-gyp-tians, and delivered our houses. And the people bowed the head and worshipped. (28) And the children of Is-ra-el went and did so; as Je-ho-vah had commanded Mo-ses and Aar-on, so did they.

(29) And it came to pass at midnight, that Je-ho-vah smote all the first-born in the land of E-gypt, from the first-born of Pha-raoh that sat on his throne unto the first-born of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the first-born of cattle. (30) And Pha-raoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the E-gyp-tians; and there was a great cry in E-gypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead. (31) And he called for Mo-ses and Aar-on by night, and said, Rise up, get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Is-ra-el; and go, serve Je-ho-vah, as ye have said. (32) Take both your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and be gone; and bless me also. (33) And the E-gyp-tians were urgent upon the people, to send them out of the land in haste; for they said, We are all dead men. (34) And the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneading-troughs being bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders. (35) And the children of Is-ra-el

did according to the word of Mo-ses; and they asked of the E-gyp-tains jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: (36) and Je-ho-vah gave the people favor in the sight of the E-gyp-tians, so that they let them have what they asked. And they despoiled the E-gyp-tians.

(37) And the children of Is-ra-el journeyed from Ram-e-ses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand on foot that were men, besides children. (38) And a mixed multitude went up also with them; and flocks and herds, even very much cattle. (39) And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they brought forth out of E-gypt; for it was not leavened, because they were thrust out of E-gypt, and could not tarry, neither had they prepared for themselves any victuals. (40) Now the time that the children of Is-ra-el dwelt in E-gypt was four hundred and thirty years. (41) And it came to pass at the end of four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of Je-ho-vah went out from the land of E-gypt. (42) It is a night to be much observed unto Je-ho-vah for bringing them out from the land of E-gypt: this is that night of Je-ho-vah, to be much observed of all the children of Is-ra-el throughout their generations.

(43) And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses and Aar-on, This is the ordinance of the passover: there shall no foreigner eat thereof; (44) but every man's servant that is bought for money, when thou has circumcised him, then shall he eat thereof. (45) A sojourner and a hired servant shall not eat thereof. (46) In one house shall it be eaten; thou shalt not carry forth aught of the flesh abroad out of the house; neither shall ye break a bone thereof. (47) All the congregation of Is-ra-el shall keep it. (48) And when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the passover to Je-ho-vah, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as one that is born in the land: but no un-circumcised person shall eat thereof. (49) One law shall be to him that is home-born, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you. (50) Thus did all the children of Is-ra-el; as Je-ho-vah commanded Mo-ses and Aar-on, so did they. (51) And it came to pass the selfsame day, that Je-ho-vah did bring the children of Is-ra-el out of the land of E-gypt by their hosts.

EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER TWELVE  
QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. After careful reading, propose a brief title or topic for the chapter.
2. Where were God's instructions about the Passover given? (12:1)
3. What change in the calendar did the Passover make? (12:2)
4. When is the month Abib according to our calendar? (13:4)
5. On what day of the month was the lamb to be selected? (12:3)
6. What was the passover lamb a type of? (I Cor. 5:7)
7. What groups of people selected lambs? (12:3)
8. What if a family was too small to eat a whole lamb? (12:4)
9. What were the qualifications for the passover lamb? (12:5)
10. On what day was the lamb slain? At what time of day? (12:6)
11. What was done with the blood? (12:7, 22)
12. How was the lamb to be cooked and served? (12:8-9, 11)
13. What was done with the inwards of the lamb? (12:9)
14. What was to be done with the leftovers? (12:10, 45)
15. How were the people to be clothed as they ate the passover? In what manner was it to be eaten? (12:11)
16. What does *passover* mean? (12:11-13)
17. Who passed over the land? (12:12, 13, 23)
18. Against what would God execute judgment? (12:12)
19. What caused God to pass over the Israelites? (12:13)
20. How was the Passover remembered after the original observance in Egypt? (12:14)
21. What feast followed the Passover? (12:15, 17)
22. How long did this feast last? (12:15, 18)
23. What was the penalty for eating leaven? (12:15)
24. When were holy convocations (gatherings) to be held during the feast of Unleavened bread? (12:16)
25. What work was to be done during this feast? (12:16)
26. What was the cause or purpose for observing the feast of unleavened bread? (12:17)
27. On what days of the month were the feasts of Passover and unleavened bread? (12:18)

28. Was there any restriction about leaven besides not eating it? (12:19)
29. Who selected and killed the passover lamb? (12:21)
30. What was used to apply blood? (12:22)
31. Where were the people to stay during the passover? (12:22)
32. Did the Israelites leave in the middle of the night or the morning? (12:22)
33. How long was the Passover to be observed? (12:24)
34. Who would ask questions about the Passover observance? (12:26)
35. What was the reaction of the Israelites to Moses' orders about the Passover? (12:27-28, 50)
36. At what time did the firstborn die? (12:29)
37. What was the reaction of the Egyptians to the death of their firstborn? (12:30)
38. Who called Moses and Aaron? When? (12:31)
39. What did Pharaoh tell Moses and Aaron to do? (12:31-32)
40. What did Pharaoh ask Moses to do for him? (12:32)
41. How urgent were the Egyptians? (12:33)
42. What is stated about the bread dough the Israelites carried out? (12:34, 39)
43. What did the Israelites ask for? (12:35)
44. What place was the starting point of Israel's journey out? (12:37)
45. How many Israelites went out of Egypt? (12:37; Numbers 1:46)
46. Who went out with the Israelites? (Ex. 12:38)
47. How long had the Israelites dwelt in Egypt? (12:40-41; Gen. 15:13; Acts 7:6; Gal. 3:17)
48. How were the Israelites to feel about and react to the Passover? (12:42)
49. Could foreigners eat the passover? (12:43)
50. When could servants or sojourners eat the passover? (12:44-45, 48)
51. Where was the passover to be eaten? (12:46)
52. What was the law about the bones of the passover lamb? (12:46)

53. Why is this law about the bones significant to Christians? (John 19:36)
54. Which Israelites were to keep the passover? (12:47)
55. In what groups did God bring the Israelites out? (12:51)

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### EXODUS TWELVE: OVER AND OUT!

(The radio-operators' expression "Over and out" sums up much of the story in Exodus 12.)

- I. God passed over Egypt; 12:1-36.
- II. Israel went out of Egypt; 12:37-51.

### THE FIRST MONTH OF THE YEAR! (Ex. 12:2)

- I. A time of deliverance; Ex. 12:13.
- II. A time of sacrifice; Ex. 12:3-6.
- III. A time of observance; Ex. 12:42.
- IV. A time to step forth; Ex. 12:37.

### RELIGION IN THE HOME! (12:3-4, 15)

- I. Sacrifices in every home; (12:3)
- II. Gatherings in every home; (12:3-4, 22)
- III. Blood on every house; (12:7, 22)
- IV. Instruction in every home; (12:26-27)

### NO LEAVEN IN YOUR HOUSES! (12:19)

- I. Unleavened bread after the Passover; (12:15).  
(After accepting Christ, our Passover lamb, we must put out the leaven of malice and wickedness. I Cor. 5:7-8).

- II. Unleavened bread in every generation; (12:17).  
 ("Be thou faithful unto death." Rev. 2:10).

**DEATH OF THE FIRSTBORN,  
 A TYPE OF CHRIST'S SECOND COMING! (12:29)**

- I. A time of judgment and vengeance; Ex. 6:6; II Thess. 1:7-9.  
 II. Advance warnings given; Ex. 11:4-5; 12:12; Rev. 1:7.  
 III. Sudden; Ex. 12:29; I Thess. 5:2-3.  
 IV. No one escapes; Ex. 12:30; I Thess. 5:3.  
 V. A time of cry; Ex. 12:30; Rev. 1:7; 6:15-17.  
 VI. Deliverance to those under the blood; Ex. 12:13, 23; Rev. 5:9.

**DELIVERANCE OF GOD'S PEOPLE! (EX. 12:29-36)**

- I. It is the work of GOD; (12:29).  
 II. It requires obedience; (12:28).  
 III. It requires stepping forth; (12:34, 37)  
 IV. It is triumphant; (12:35-36).

**GOD FULFILLING HIS PROMISES!**

1. His people would come out from bondage. (Gen. 15:14)  
 2. His people would come forth with great substance. (Gen. 15:14; Ex. 12:36)  
 3. Pharaoh would drive them out. (Ex. 6:1; 12:31-33)  
 4. His people would be ill treated for four hundred years. (Gen. 15:13; Ex. 12:40)

**THE PASSOVER**  
 in Egypt

— A Type of —

**CHRIST,**  
 Our Passover

1. The start of a new year.                      1. The start of new life for



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| Ex. 12:2.  | the believer. II Cor. 5:17.   |
| 2. Each family, led by the father, kept the feast.<br>Ex. 12:3         | 2. Each person and family keeps "the feast."<br>II Cor. 5:8.            |
| 3. Unblemished lamb;<br>Ex. 12:5                                       | 3. Christ, the lamb of God (John 1:29), without sin; (Heb. 4:14-15).    |
| 4. Lamb pre-selected;<br>Ex. 12:3.                                     | 4. Christ foreknown;<br>I Peter 1:19-20.                                |
| 5. Lamb slain! Ex. 12:6, 21.   | 5. Christ slain! Rev. 5:6; 13:8.  |
| 6. Not a bone broken;<br>Ex. 12:46; Num. 9:12.                         | 6. Not a bone broken;<br>John 19:33, 36.                                |
| 7. Blood applied to doors;<br>Ex. 12:7, 22.                            | 7. Blood sprinkled upon our hearts; I Pet. 1:2;<br>Heb. 12:24.          |
| 8. Lamb eaten; 12:8-10   | 8. Must eat of Christ;<br>John 6:53.                                    |
| 9. Be ready to march;<br>Ex. 12:11.                                    | 9. Be ready to obey;<br>Titus 3:1.                                      |
| 10. All firstborn died, except those under the blood;<br>12:12-13, 29. | 10. All to perish except those under the blood;<br>Heb. 9:22; Rom. 5:9. |
| 11. An eternal observance;<br>Ex. 12:14, 24-25.                        | 11. Jesus the same forever;<br>Heb. 13:8.                               |
| 12. Leaven removed;<br>Ex. 12:15, 19-20; 13:6-7.                       | 12. Purge out old leaven (malice, wickedness);<br>I Cor. 5:8.           |
| 13. Holy convocations to be kept; Ex. 12:16.                           | 13. Need to assemble together; Heb. 10:25.                              |
| 14. Brought deliverance;<br>Ex. 12:30-33.                              | 14. Brings deliverance;<br>Heb. 2:14-15.                                |
| 15. Available to all those circumcised; 12:43-48.                      | 15. Available to all those circumcised in baptism;<br>Col. 2:11-13.     |
| 16. To speak of it always;<br>Ex. 12:24-27; 13:8-9.                    | 16. Speak always of our hope;<br>I Pet. 3:15.                           |

## EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER TWELVE

1. *What is in Exodus twelve?*

God's instructions to Moses in the land of Egypt occupy 12:1-20. These instructions concerned how the Israelites should kill and eat the passover in Egypt (12:3-14), and how they should keep the feast of unleavened bread (12:15-20). Pervading these instructions are words about the future observance of these feasts.

The chapter relates how Moses gave a last-day reminder to the people to kill the passover (12:21-28).

The chapter tells of the death of Egypt's firstborn, and how the Egyptians thrust out the Israelites, and how the Israelites collected jewelry from the Egyptians. It tells of Israel's mass departure. (12:29-42)

The chapter closes with Jehovah's revelation to Moses about foreigners eating the Passover (12:43-51).

2. *Where did God give the instructions about the Passover and the feast of unleavened bread? (12:1)*

He gave them *in Egypt*. Of the three annual feasts of the Israelites, the Passover alone is said to have been instituted in Egypt. Why should this statement be made, unless as a matter of fact it is true?

Critics maintain that the Passover information in Ex. 12 is a very late priestly composition (fifth century B.C.), designed to give an explanation for the Passover and to enforce its observance upon the people. Supposedly it had been borrowed from a sheep-herding people, who at lambing season smeared blood on their tent-flaps to protect their flocks from some demonic spirits. Such ideas lack any proof at all, and certainly do not agree with the Biblical information about the Passover's origin.

3. *What month became the first month of the year? Why?*

The month when the Passover occurred became thereafter the first month of the Israelites' religious year. God designated this to be done because the Passover was the occasion of Israel's liberation from Egypt. It started a new epoch in

Israel's history.

The month containing the Passover was anciently called *Abib*, and occurred partly in our March and partly in April. Ex. 23:15: "You shall observe the feast of unleavened bread; for seven days you are to eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, at the appointed time in the month *Abib*, for in it you came out of Egypt. Compare Ex. 34:18; Deut. 16:1.

This month was called Nisan after the Babylonian captivity. See Esther 3:7; Neh. 2:1.

The Israelites had two starting points for their years. The religious calendar began in *Abib*. The civil (or agricultural) calendar began six months later in *Ethanim* (also called *Tishri*), which was in our Sept.-Oct. The *Tishri-to-Tishri* year had been used before the Passover was instituted.

In a true spiritual sense the Passover marked the beginning of a new year for Israel. In the same way, our acceptance of Jesus as Lord, Messiah, and savior is the start of God's new year for us. It is our spiritual birthday. Our past life in sin was a bondage, like Israel's in Egypt. When any one is in Christ, lo, he is a new creature! (II Cor. 5:17)

4. *What animal was selected for the Passover? (12:3-5)*

A *lamb* was selected. The Hebrew word for lamb used here (*seh*) referred also to kid goats. See 12:5.

Each family was to select its own lamb, and thus many lambs would be sacrificed. In view of this fact, it is very noteworthy to see that throughout this chapter the lamb is referred to as *singular* (not *lambs*). We feel that this was no accident, but was God's way of indicating that there was only ONE true passover lamb in HIS mind. That lamb is Christ, our passover, who has been sacrificed for us! (John 1:29; I Cor. 5:7). Unless the Passover is studied with this in mind, it is little more than a triviality of history. But the twelfth chapter of Exodus becomes exciting when we realize that almost every line of it reveals more about Christ, the true Passover lamb.

5. *When was the Passover lamb to be selected? (12:3, 6)*

The lamb was to be selected on the tenth day of the month.

Presumably it was kept apart from the rest of the flock. It was to be slain on the fourteenth day of the month. (12:6)

The act of selecting out the Passover lamb four days in advance served several purposes. It directed the people's minds toward the coming feast. It became a topic of conversation. The visible presence of the lamb stimulated the people to do the other necessary jobs in preparation for the coming feast and for their departure. More than that, it illustrated the fact that Christ our passover lamb was selected and foreordained to die long before He perished on Calvary. Indeed, he was foreknown before the foundation of the world! (I Pet. 1:19-20)

In Ex. 12:3 we have the first Biblical usage of the term *congregation* (Heb. *edah*). This became a common technical term for the whole body of the Israelites. The word has a somewhat similar meaning to the New Testament word *ekklesia*, the church, or the called-out assembly. Though there were many families in Israel, they were all one congregation. In a similar way we Christians today should think and act like members of a single, world-wide congregation of those redeemed by Christ, our Passover lamb. Loyalty to our humanly-created denominations and exclusive devotion to our local congregations destroy the Spirit-given unity of the whole world-wide congregation of God.

6. *What function did family units have in the Passover?* (12:3-4)

The Passover was eaten by family groups individually. The Passover was fundamentally a family-feast, although two or more small families could join together if one family was too small to eat an entire lamb. Jewish tradition later specified ten as the smallest number of participants at a family Passover. But this number was originally left to the discretion of individual heads of families.

The observance of the Passover in this way was a simple, manageable way to guarantee the participation of every Israelite in the Passover feast. It also showed God's approval of and stress on the family. The family is a vital, divinely-ordained unit in society.

7. *What kind of lamb was selected?* (12:5)

The lamb was without blemish, having no sores, scars, or deformities. Compare Lev. 22:20-22. Likewise Christ was without blemish of sin (I Peter 1:19; Heb. 4:15). The lamb was to be a male a year old. The Jewish rabbis interpreted this to mean "born within the year." More probably it meant "a full year old." The Hebrew literally says "a son of a year." A similar expression is used in Gen. 21:4, where we are told that Isaac was circumcised when he was a "son of eight days," that is, eight days old. Lev. 27:6 has a similar wording: "from a son of a month unto a son of five years."<sup>1</sup>

Our Lord Jesus, like the full-grown yearling lamb, was offered at the peak of his young maturity, a little beyond age thirty (Luke 3:23).

8. *Who killed the lamb? When?* (12:6)

The *whole congregation* killed it "between the two evenings." (Compare Num. 9:3.) Probably only one person in each family actually killed the lamb, the father or someone he appointed. But by the principle of *representation* every member of the family killed it; all were involved in its death. It is most remarkable that "*all* the assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill *it*," as if God referred to ONE lamb for the whole body of Israelites. We feel that this is exactly what God had in mind. God was providing to them an advance symbol, or type, of THE lamb, Christ!

By the same principle of representation, we all killed the Lord Jesus. The Jews and the Romans condemned him and drove the nails. But we by our sins also shared in killing him!

This principle works also for our benefit. We become sharers in the death of Jesus by this principle. Jesus died *for* sins, and died *to* sins, once for all. We who are baptized *into his death* (Romans 6:3-4) have been united with Him in death. His death becomes our death to sin. We are united with him in death and in resurrection.

The lamb was slain about sunset. Deut. 16:6: "Thou shalt

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<sup>1</sup>Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

sacrifice the passover at even, at the going down of the sun." Ex. 12:6 literally says "between the two evenings." The meaning of this is not absolutely certain, but the Jews interpreted it to mean between three and six o'clock in the afternoon.<sup>2</sup> Supposedly if it were after sunset, it would place the sacrifice on the next calendar day. The annual Day of Atonement was on the tenth day of the seventh month, but the observance began on the ninth day of the month, at even (Lev. 23:32). Perhaps this is an analogy with the start of the Passover: it could be slain at any period from late afternoon, to sunset, or shortly after.

It is noteworthy that our Lord died at the ninth hour, about 3:00 p.m., which was the time the passover lambs began to be slain.

#### 9. *Was the Passover a SACRIFICE?*

Certainly it was a kind of sacrifice. Observe that the Passover ritual is called the *sacrifice* of the Lord's Passover (Ex. 12:27; 34:25; Deut. 16:2).

The only reason for hesitating to call the Passover a sacrifice is that its original observance in Egypt did not involve use of altars or priests. But this was due to the fact that the first Passover was kept during the patriarchal age before the law of Moses (given at Mt. Sinai) set up a system of priests, altars, etc. But this did not keep it from being a true sacrifice. Prior to the law of Moses the heads of families often functioned as priests to offer sacrifices (Gen. 8:20; Job 1:5).

Like all true sacrifices the Passover involved blood and death. Blood was given by God to make atonement for our souls (Lev. 17:11), and was employed for no other purpose.

Like all true sacrifices, the Passover was in later times to be offered only at the central place of worship which God had designated (Deut. 12:2, 5-6).

Like all true sacrifices, the Passover involved substitution! The Israelites were sinners and idolaters, just like the Egyptians. They deserved to perish (as we do also). God did

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<sup>2</sup>Josephus, *Antiquities*, XIV, iv, 3.

not spare Israel because they were righteous (Deut. 9:4). God was determined to destroy all the firstborn IN Egypt, not just the firstborn OF Egypt (Ex. 11:4). The death of the lamb was accepted as the substitute for the death of the firstborn of Israel.

We stress the fact that the Passover was a sacrifice, because it was a type of the death of Christ. Christ's death was also a sacrifice, the righteous Christ dying in the place of unrighteous sinners like us. His death was not just a moral lesson or good example but a provision for our guilt, a substitution for us. This is a great comfort to us, if we have become truly aware of our desperate condition in sin.

10. *Where was the blood placed?* (12:7, 22)

It was placed on the two side posts and on the lintels across the tops of the doorways of the houses where the passover was being eaten. A bunch of hyssop was used to apply the blood to the door-posts, after the hyssop had been dipped in the blood in the basin.

The sprinkling of the blood and the use of *hyssop* both suggest cleansing and putting out (expiation) of uncleanness. Hyssop is a lowly plant, sometimes growing out of cracks in walls (I Kings 4:33). Hyssop was used in the rituals for cleansing leprosy (Lev. 14:4-6, 49-52), for cleansing the uncleanness associated with the dead (Num. 19:18-19), and for cleansing sin generally (Ps. 51:7).

The blood spattered about the door was the only difference that night between Israel and Egypt. Likewise, on the day of judgment, whether or not the blood of Christ is sprinkled upon our hearts (that is, souls) will be the only criterion for determining whether we receive eternal life or eternal punishment. See I Peter 1:2; Heb. 12:24.

Ex. 12:22 speaks of dipping the hyssop in the blood in the *basin*. The Hebrew word translated *basin* (*saph*) indeed means basin, or bowl, (as in Jer. 52:19; I Kings 7:50). But it is also translated *threshold*, or sill (as in Judges 19:27; II Kings 12:9). The Greek O.T. translated it in Ex. 12:22 as *thura*, meaning door or threshold.

Some interpreters make a big matter of this, arguing that by having blood on the threshold, all four sides of the doorway were sprinkled with blood, and thus the Israelites were totally protected from entry by a "destroyer." Whether this idea is set forth with a reverent attitude (as by Pink) or as an attempt to explain the sprinkling of the blood as a custom borrowed from other nations by the Israelites, it is still not valid. How could there be enough blood in (or on) the threshold to dip a hyssop into it? Why should blood be placed on the door threshold where it could be trodden under foot of men?

The 1969 *Broadman Bible Commentary* seriously assures us that we need to know that the doorway was the abode of good and evil spirits in Near Eastern culture, in order to have understanding of the smearing of the blood in the Passover narrative (p. 373). Possibly some superstitious peoples did believe that this was true; but it has no proven connection with the acts of the Israelites.

11. *How was the lamb prepared for eating? How was it served?* (12:8-9, 46)

It was roasted entire (not cut up), probably over an open fire. It was served with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. The inward parts were roasted with the rest of it. (We are quite sure that the entrails were first cleaned out before roasting.)

Perhaps the significance of the lamb's being roasted entire lay in the fact that Christ sacrificed himself entirely, body and soul. The entirety of the lamb hardly represents the perfect unity of Israel as a nation,<sup>3</sup> unless Israel is represented as a sacrifice for its own salvation.

The Greek O.T. (LXX) inserts into 12:10 the words, "and a bone of it ye shall not break." This is stated in 12:46, both in the Hebrew and the Greek. The unbroken bones of the Passover lamb symbolized the unbroken bones of Christ (John 19:36). See notes on 12:46.

Unleavened bread is bread made without yeast or other

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<sup>3</sup>J. H. Hertz, *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs* (London: Soncino, 1969), p. 255.



“starter.” Usually the leaven was a pinch of the old dough added to the next new batch of dough. Unleavened bread would be flat, unraised, and probably pancake-shaped. Leaven was not used on Passover night because there was not time for the process of letting the bread rise (Ex. 12:34).

The apostle Paul reveals that there was a spiritual meaning in the unleavened bread, which was not clearly revealed in the original feast. Leaven is a symbol of such evil influences as malice, wickedness, and hypocrisy (II Cor. 5:7; Luke 12:1; Mark 8:15). These are “leaven” which must be put out of a Christian’s life.

The *bitter herbs* that were served with the unleavened bread and roasted lamb probably were symbols of the previous sufferings of the Israelites. They also remind us that Christ was a man of sorrows (Isa. 53:3). The bitter herbs are also referred to in Num. 9:11. The Jewish writings called the *Mishna* allowed as bitter herbs lettuce, chicory, pepperwort, snakeroot, or dandelion. (*Pesahim* 2:6) (The *Mishna* dates from second century B.C. to second century A.D.)

12. *Why were no leftovers kept from the Passover feast? (12:10, 46)*

The reason is not stated. Compare Num. 9:12; Deut. 16:4. Perhaps it was to cause the participants to associate this food exclusively with the deliverance they experienced that night. Also perhaps leftover fragments might have been used as objects for superstitious practices. Also any leftover fragments might have fallen into irreverent hands that would treat them spitefully. God has frequently claimed holy things for His exclusive use. See Ex. 30:37-38; Lev. 27:30ff.

13. *In what manner were the Israelites to eat the Passover? (12:11)*

They were to eat it in haste. The hour was probably late by the time the lamb was roasted and served, and lamb had to be eaten by midnight (11:4; 12:29). There was also many other last-minute jobs for the Israelites, as any one who has

ever packed up to move can testify. As they ate the supper, they were to be packed-up and clothed for travel; even though the hour was late. We wonder if some babies were not crying because of the interruption in their usual life patterns.

Little did the Israelites dream that those same clothes and shoes they wore that night would be miraculously preserved for forty years in the desert. (Deut. 29:5; Neh. 9:21)

The instructions about the Passover were made forcible by God's declaration "It is *Jehovah's* passover." Although the passover was for man's good, it was not BY man. The Lord God was the creator and designer of the passover. Salvation is of GOD. "GOD so loved the world that he gave. . . ." Often we fail to honor God and His basic place in our salvation. In various cases of sacrifice God himself has provided FOR HIMSELF the sacrifice that saves us. Thus he did for Abraham (Gen. 22:8). Thus also He did when he provided for Christ a *body* in which to die for us (Heb. 10:5-7).

The Passover was a new thing, and not a reinterpretation of some old previously-existing ritual.

The Hebrew word for *passover* is *pesach*; the Greek is *pascha*, from which we get "*paschal* lamb." *Pesach* means a sparing, or immunity from penalty or calamity. Its meaning can be seen (by the use of the related verb *pasach*) in Isaiah 31:5: "Jehovah of hosts will protect Jerusalem; he will protect it and deliver it, he will *pass over* and preserve it." *Pasach* has another meaning: to halt, limp, or waver, as in I Kings 18:21. This meaning does not seem to apply to the matter of the Passover.

14. *What disaster would strike Egypt the night of the Passover?* (12:12)

God would go through the land of Egypt on that (literally "this") night, and smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both of men and beast. By this act God would perform (literally "do") judgments against all the gods of Egypt. Compare Numbers 33:4. Note that it was GOD who passed over the land. No "destroying angel" is mentioned here; but

see the notes on 12:23.

*Pass through* in 12:12 is a different term from *pass over*. *Passing through* merely has the idea of movement across some area. *Passing OVER* has the idea of sparing, or passing by. To Egypt it was a passing through; to Israel it was a passing over!

Pharaoh considered himself a son of various gods. His firstborn son was the prime heir to his divine royal dignity. But God executed judgment upon Egypt's *gods* during the plagues, and particularly at the passover. All the gods of Egypt could not save the firstborn of Egypt.

Again God asserted, "I am Jehovah." How often God had said that! See notes on Ex. 6:2.

15. *What was the purpose of the blood?* (12:13)

The blood was to be a *token*, or sign, for the Israelites, upon their houses. A sign of what? A sign of faith; a sign of sacrifice; a sign of obedience; a sign for deliverance. A sign to whom? To God; to the "destroyer" (12:23); to one another.

How glorious are the words: "When I see the blood, I will pass over you."

Does the word *plague* in 12:13 indicate that the firstborn of Egypt died by a *disease* plague? The Hebrew word here translated *plague* (Heb. *negeph*) is a rather general term meaning a smiting, hurting, or stumbling. By itself it does not necessarily refer to a disease plague.

However, Psalm 78:50-51 says, "He spared not their soul from death, But (Heb., *And*) gave their life over to the *pestilence*, and smote all the firstborn in Egypt." The word *pestilence* here is *deber*, the same word translated *murrain* (once) and *pestilence* forty-seven times. In some Bibles the words "their life" is translated "their beasts" in the margin. This would connect the pestilence to the death of the cattle. However, the literal reading is "their life"; and the close connection of Psalm 78:50c with 78:51a seems definitely to link the pestilence with the death of the firstborn.

When we first read Ps. 78:50-51, we found ourselves resisting the idea that a pestilence killed Egypt's firstborn,

lest anyone think that we were endeavoring to give a purely natural explanation for the death of the firstborn. We believe that this was a *miraculous* judgment in the fullest sense of that term. Still we cannot deny the testimony of Ps. 78:50; it is also part of God's word. Therefore we accept the information that the firstborn of Egypt perished by a pestilence. But what a miraculous pestilence! It was almost instantaneous in its effect. It struck every house at the same moment. It struck only at the oldest child in every family, and the oldest beasts. It did not strike in houses with blood at the doors.

16. *What observance of the Passover was to be kept in the future? (12:14, 24-27)*

It was to be observed every year thereafter as a memorial and as a feast unto Jehovah, throughout Israel's generations, for ever. Ex. 13:10. Compare Lev. 23:4-5. In one way the Passover was for ever, because Christ is for ever.

The Old Testament records just six times when the passover was kept: 1. Egypt (Ex. 12); 2. Sinai (Num. 9); 3. Canaan (Joshua 5); 4. Hezekiah (II Chron. 30); 5. Josiah (II Kings 23); 6. Jews returned from Babylon (Ezra 6). We suppose that it was kept in other years. But we know the Israelites were not always faithful in observing it.

Repeating the Passover yearly made the later generations participants in the original event in a very real way. Similarly God has given to us the observances of baptism and the communion. These are both memorials to past events and means to help us be participants in those events.

17. *What observance followed the Passover? (12:15-25)*

The feast of Unleavened bread followed the Passover during the seven days after it. (See Lev. 23:5-8; Num. 28:17-25; Deut. 16:3-8.) These two feasts were so closely associated that they were sometimes spoken of as one feast (Ex. 23:14-15).

During this feast no leaven of any sort was to be tolerated in the Israelites' houses.<sup>4</sup> This was a convenient ordinance

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<sup>4</sup>Jews in later centuries excluded as leaven any product made of grain, such as beer, vinegar, porridge, paste, or cosmetics.

for the Israelites who left Egypt to observe. They left in such a hurry their bread was not leavened anyway (12:34).

It rather appears that Moses did not relay God's instructions (given in 12:15-20) concerning the feast of unleavened bread until after their departure was underway. Ex. 12:17 speaks of Israel's departure as a completed act, which had occurred "this day." Moses gave the instructions about the Passover at least four days in advance (12:3, 6), and he gave a last-day reminder about killing the Passover (12:21). But the instructions about the feast of Unleavened bread apparently were delivered the day of Israel's departure (13:5-7). Another possible interpretation is that God said "I have brought you out" (a completed action) before He actually had brought them out, because the predicted act was as good as done in His determined plans. Numerous Bible prophecies are spoken of as completed acts.

During the feast of unleavened bread Israel was to hold holy convocations (assemblies) on the first and seventh days of the feast. Also they were to do only such work as was necessary to eat.

The feast of Unleavened bread was probably impossible to keep fully during the years of Israel's wanderings. They had no "houses" to remove leaven from (12:19). God stressed that they were to observe the feast when they arrived in Canaan (13:5-6).

The New Testament explains leaven as a symbol of corruption and evil influence. (See Matt. 16:6; Mark 8:15; I Cor. 5:7. Matt. 13:33 seems to be an exception.) This suggests the following typology: When we accept Christ (symbolized by the Passover lamb), then we must put out of our lives all ungodliness and worldly lusts (symbolized by the leaven) for ever (symbolized by the seven days). *Seven* is the Biblical number signifying completeness. The seven days of unleavened bread suggest complete and constant conformity to God's word.

Failure to keep the feast of unleavened bread was to be punished by being cut off from the congregation of Israel.

Exactly what this punishment involved is not clearly specified, whether execution, or expulsion from access to the temple sacrifices, or from buying and selling among Israelites, or from all social contacts with the people. These are dire penalties.

Liberal critics<sup>5</sup> maintain that the feasts of Passover and Unleavened bread were both borrowed by the Israelites from the Canaanites or someone else. They maintain that these were originally distinct, unrelated occasions. Passover was supposedly a pastoral feast when blood was placed on the tent flaps to protect herds. Unleavened bread was a cult feast at the beginning of wheat harvest, when the first yearly produce of the land was offered to the gods, and eaten while uncontaminated by addition of leaven. There is no concrete evidence even for the existence of such feasts, much less for the Israelites borrowing them. Certainly this interpretation conflicts with the Biblical information.

18. *What last-day Passover instructions did Moses give the people? (12:21-22)*

Moses called the elders (the older men functioning as leaders of tribes and families) and told them again the information God has given approximately a week before. See 12:3-7. Moses added statements about using hyssop.<sup>6</sup> (See notes on 12:7.) He added instructions about not leaving the houses that night until morning.

"By faith Moses kept the Passover, and the sprinkling of the blood, that the destroyer of the firstborn should not touch them" (Heb. 11:28).

Regarding the *basin* (12:22), or threshold, see notes on 12:7.

Regarding the perpetual observance of the passover (12:24-25), see the notes on 12:14.

Critics ascribe 12:21-27 to a tenth century author ("J") in

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<sup>5</sup>As an example see Martin Noth, *Exodus*, p. 97.

<sup>6</sup>The exact botanical identification of the hyssop referred to in the Bible is somewhat uncertain. It may be the herb majoram. Or it may be a long-stalked, corn-like plant, such as durrah. John 19:29 seems to refer to such a plant.

the Southern kingdom of Judah.<sup>7</sup> But 12:21-27 makes good sense as a continuation of the preceding narrative. Either 12:21-27 is the public announcements by Moses of the instructions God had given him (in 12:1ff), or, much more probably, it was Moses' last-day reminder of those instructions.

19. *Who was the destroyer? (12:23)*

We suppose that the destroyer was an angel sent by God. Psalm 78:49 says, "He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, . . . a band of *angels* of evil." Whether Ps. 78:49 refers to the preceding verse, which refers to the plague of hail, or to the following verse, which refers to the death of the firstborn, can be debated. It may refer to both. Angels have been employed on other occasions by God to execute His judgments. Angels were sent to Sodom (Gen. 18:2; 19:1, 13). An angel of God slew in Jerusalem (II Sam. 24:15-16).

In Ex. 11:4 and 12:12 God said that HE HIMSELF would pass over the land that night. Even 12:23 says that JEHOVAH would pass through to smite the firstborn. But this does not rule out the likelihood that an angel or angels accompanied God in this mission. The scripture does not contain the expression "death angel." "Destroying angel" might be more Biblical terminology.

Certainly this *destroyer* was not some demonic spirit trying to get to the Israelites in their houses while God was trying to fend it off. Evil spirits are real, but they operate only within the limits that God tolerates. Satan could only afflict Job to the degree that God consented to tolerate (1:9-12; 2:6). The universe is not controlled by two powers competing for mastery, but by God alone, who barely tolerates the Satanic evil for a little while. It was God himself, accompanied by HIS destroyer(s), who went forth that night to take vengeance.

20. *How would children be taught about the Passover? (12:26-27)*

When the Israelites observed the unusual supper in future

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<sup>7</sup>Broadman Bible Commentary, Vol. 1 (1969), p. 372.

generations, the children would ask questions about it, as children do! The parents were to be prepared to answer and eager to do so. There was to be no talk like, "Can't you see I'm busy, Junior? Beat it!"

In the modern Jewish passover ritual there is a prescribed point when a child asks "Why do we keep the Passover?" and the parent then relates the history of it. Originally the passover was not so formally structured, and the question was to be answered at whatever time it came up.

John Davis<sup>8</sup> reminds us that the concern which Moses showed over the meaning of this Passover ordinance should be a warning to us that God's ordinances are not only to be perpetuated in correct form, but to be taught as representing personal experience and correct theology. In our homes and Bible schools we should be quick and eager to answer the questions of our children concerning the religious observances they see. It is God's plan that the children be taught from infancy to serve God intelligently.

Note the rather formal title for the passover: "the sacrifice of Jehovah's passover." Here again the Passover is expressly said to be a sacrifice. Sacrifices deal with SIN. Compare Deut. 16:2. This fact transforms the Passover from a ritual of the past to a reality in the present.

The word *Passover* is applied to (1) the lamb killed in the sacrifice (12:21); to (2) all the events of the feast (Lev. 23:5); to (3) the Lord's act of mercy in sparing the Israelites (Ex. 12:14).

21. *Did the Israelites obey Moses' instructions?* (12:27-28)

They not only obeyed, but obeyed worshipfully.

Their obedience was purely an act of faith in God and Moses. However, after seeing all the plagues Moses had predicted and brought upon Egypt, the people certainly should have had faith. But people do not always respond in a reasonable manner. After people had seen all the miracles Jesus did, they still did not believe him (John 12:37).

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<sup>8</sup>*Moses and the Gods of Egypt*, p. 144.



22. *What happened at midnight in Egypt?* (12:29-30)

The Lord smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt. There was not a house where there was not one dead.

These deaths were not painless and silent. The shrieks of the dying awakened every house. And there arose a great cry in Egypt as the firstborn expired. (Compare 11:6)

God had foretold to Pharaoh, "Because thou hast refused to let Israel, my firstborn, go, . . . behold, I will slay thy son, thy firstborn" (4:23). Moses had clearly forewarned Pharaoh (11:4-6). But seemingly Pharaoh had just refused to believe. Therefore, the fearsome threat to Pharaoh came to pass. There is a time-limit on God's mercy to rebels.

Sinners cannot elude the retributions of God. Men cannot avoid the stroke of heaven. It comes at a time when "ye think not," when everyone is "safe" asleep. The second coming of Christ will be like the death of the firstborn in Egypt - sudden, final, and fearsome to those who are not under the blood. (See I Thess. 5:1-3; II Thess. 1:7-8; Rev. 1:7.)

The Egyptians did not see the destroying angel(s) who struck their firstborn with a sudden fatal pestilence. But they knew the source of this calamity: it was from Jehovah, the God of Israel, whose prophet Moses they had disbelieved. (Regarding the destroying angel(s), see notes on 12:23. Regarding the pestilence, see notes on 12:13.)

The firstborn of every social level died, from the firstborn of Pharaoh, who sat upon the throne, to the firstborn of the captive in the dungeon (literally, "house of the pit"). In 11:5 the lowest level of society was "the maid-servant that is behind the (grinding) mill." But on the Passover night social status made no difference. Only the blood mattered.

If Amenhotep II was the Pharaoh of the exodus, his son who died was the older brother of Thutmose IV, who succeeded Amenhotep II. Between the legs of the Sphinx in Egypt stands a large stone bearing an inscription by Thutmose IV. In this inscription, called the dream-inscription, it is evident that Thutmose IV was not the oldest son, the

usual heir to the throne, but that he had to obtain this position by other means. We feel that this came about as the result of the death of the firstborn son.

This inscription<sup>9</sup> tells how Thutmose IV went to sleep beside the Sphinx, whose body was then mostly covered with sand. In a dream as he lay there, the Sphinx told him that he would give Thutmose the kingdom upon earth, at the head of the living. "Thou shalt wear the southern crown and the northern crown." If Thutmose had been the legitimate heir of the throne, he would not have needed such a rationalization as this to claim it.

Liberal critics do not like the story of the death of the firstborn. While we get no joy from it (neither did God!), we do not feel we have the right to sit in judgment upon God's word and dismiss whatever sections offend our natural feelings. To write that this story is "perhaps contradictory to the later and fuller revelation," or that it was written "in the words of men who spoke in pre-Christian cultural, ethical, and theological words,"<sup>10</sup> seems to us like setting our judgment above God's. Surely a comprehension of God's absolute holiness and his hatred for sin would remove the emotional resistance to the revelations about God's punishments upon the ungodly.

23. *What did the Egyptians do when their firstborn died?* (12:30-33)

All of the Egyptians, including Pharaoh, rose up in the night, and called for Moses and Aaron, and begged them to leave their land. They seemed to fear that the plague was just beginning, and that before it was over "We are all dead men!"

Pharaoh's spirit was broken. He was no longer arrogant. He called for Moses and Aaron. Pharaoh uttered the long-awaited words: "GO, SERVE JEHOVAH." He pleads, "And bless me also." This is an amazing request in the

<sup>9</sup>*Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, (Princeton, 1955), p. 449.

<sup>10</sup>*Broadman Bible Commentary*, Vol. 1 (1969), p. 365.

light of Pharaoh's assumed divinity. "Bless me also" is a request that God would save them from further disasters, and perhaps restore their plague-battered land.

All of God's predictions came true! There was a loud cry in all of Egypt (11:6). Pharaoh's servants did come and bow down to Moses and ask them to leave (11:8). True to God's prediction, Egypt did let Israel go (3:20). As God predicted, Pharaoh by a strong hand drove them out of his land (6:1).

On the other hand, Pharaoh's prediction (or threat) that he would kill Moses if he saw him again (10:28) was forgotten! "Egypt was glad when they departed, for fear of the Israelites had fallen upon them" (Psalm 105:38).

The statement about Israel's being sent out in *haste* relates to 12:39. The Israelites did not have time enough before their departure to prepare leavened bread or food for their journey.

24. *What food did Israel take out? (12:34, 39)*

They took out only the unleavened dough, which they possibly baked on hot rocks as they stopped briefly in their travels. They had no leftover food from the Passover feast (12:10, 46). They were in a position where they would very soon become utterly dependent upon God to provide their needs.

Israel left on foot, as pilgrims, not in chariots. They left carrying their kneading-troughs (or kneading-bowls) bound up in cloths upon their shoulders. (However, that was surely better than carrying bricks, whether made with or without straw!) Israel's first experiences of freedom involved the labor of long walks, and carrying their goods, and of going forth without an adequate food supply for a long trip. Israel's experiences were much like our own: victory and glory are accompanied by hardships. They were going to need perseverance and fortitude. In giving liberty to His church God may put upon it some hardships.

25. *What did the Egyptians give to the Israelites? (12:35-36)*

They gave them jewels (literally, *vessels*) of silver and gold; and also clothing. (It does get quite cold in the mountainous

parts of the Sinai peninsula. It even snows in spots.)

As Jehovah had instructed them, the Israelites asked for these jewels (3:22; 11:2-3). The Lord gave the Israelites favor in the feelings and thoughts of the Egyptians (3:21), and the Egyptians let them have what they asked. And they *despoiled* the Egyptians. The word *spoil* has the connotation of a conqueror taking the goods of a people defeated in battle. Thus the jewelry given by the Egyptians was not basically a remuneration for long service and a compensation for cruel wrongs, but it was a symbol of triumph. (Note the theme of triumph in 15:1.)

The giving of goods was part of the fulfillment of the promise given to Abraham six centuries earlier, that the descendants of Abraham would come out of their land of bondage with great substance (Gen. 15:14).

Psalms 105:37: "He brought them forth also with silver and gold; and there was not one feeble person among their tribes." God was already at work among Israel, and thus none of them were sickly or infirm when they left Egypt.

We gather from 13:18 that some weapons were taken by the Israelites also, although our information about this is very scanty.

26. *What were the first two places in the Israelites' journey out of Egypt? (12:37)*

They journeyed from Rameses to Succoth. The *Rameses* of 12:37 is presumably the same place as that referred to in Ex. 1:11. How thrilling it was to say "Good bye forever!" to a place of cruel slave labor.

Rameses is at present considered to be either the city-site known as Tanis and Avaris (modern San el-Hagar) in the northeast part of the Nile delta, or the site of Qantir, some twelve miles south of Tanis. Extensive temple ruins from the time of king Rameses II have been found at Tanis, but no remains of the XVIII dynasty. At Qantir ruins of a large palace were found. Pottery fragments bearing the name of Per-Rameses (the name of the capital of Rameses II) were found at

Qantir.<sup>11</sup> We have selected Qantir as the proposed site of Rameses on our map. It is nearer to the land of Goshen (the Wadi Tumilat area) than Tanis is. The absence of XVIII dynasty remains at these sites remains a problem for those accepting the early exodus date, as we do, but we feel this problem will be resolved in time, as many other problems have been already.

*Succoth* is generally thought to be the hill-mound of Tell el-Maskhuta, about ten miles west of Lake Timsah. *Succoth* means booths, or tents, or temporary dwellings.

While the Israelites were travelling from Rameses to Succoth (a distance of about thirty-eight miles, or three days travelling), the Egyptians were burying their dead. Numbers 33:3 says that the children of Israel went out with a high hand in the sight of the Egyptians.

#### 27. *How many Israelites left Egypt? (12:37)*

There were six hundred thousand on foot that were men, besides children. This is a round number. The same number is given in Num. 11:21. A census at Mt. Sinai not long after their departure recorded 603,550 men (plus 22,000 Levites). See Num. 1:46; 2:32; 3:39; Ex. 38:26. After adding women and children, the total departing horde of Israelites would surely have numbered two and a half million. This vast number fulfilled God's promise to Abraham: "I will make of thee a *great nation*" (Gen. 12:2).

This enormous number seems incredible to many people.<sup>12</sup> Nonetheless, we believe it is the correct figure. It is not incredible. J. H. Hertz<sup>13</sup> tells that at the close of the eighteenth century 400,000 Tartars started from the confines of Russia toward the Chinese border in a single night.

In the censuses recorded in the book of Numbers. (chapters

<sup>11</sup>Jack Finegan, *Light From the Ancient Past*, Vol. I (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1974), p. 115.

<sup>12</sup>Even conservative authors like Alan Cole and Bernard Ramm find the number hard to believe. The radical Martin Noth says the number exceeds enormously what is even the slightest degree historically probable. (*Op. cit.*, p. 99)

<sup>13</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 259.

one and twenty-six) the total population of Israel is broken down by tribal divisions into small segments (46,500 for the tribe of Reuben, etc.). The fact that the big total population is the sum of numerous smaller group totals shows the integrity of the whole count; and also it gives evidence of the accurate preservation and presentation of the whole enumeration.

What are some of the objections to the large number of 600,000 Israelite men?

(1) The Sinai peninsula could not have supported such a mass of people, even if it was greener in Moses' time than now.<sup>14</sup> Answer: Parts of the Sinai are greener than is generally realized. But that is beside the point. The scripture unhesitatingly asserts that there was simply NOT enough food for the Israelites in Sinai (Ex. 16:3; Num. 11:6). The Israelites were maintained by the miraculous manna from the LORD for forty years (Ex. 16:35; Compare John 6:31-32, 39).

(2) The number in Ex. 12:37 is thought by some<sup>15</sup> to have been transferred from the census figures taken by King David over four hundred years later (I Chron. 21; II Sam. 24). Statistics from David's census were somehow transferred into the story of the exodus. Answer: the population totals in David's census do not agree with the 600,000 figure in Exodus (II Sam. 24:9; I Chron. 21:5).

Also the notion that the Bible as delivered to us is so scrambled up that statistics from a census taken centuries later might be included in the exodus story casts serious shadows over the general reliability of the whole Bible as God's true revelation. We prefer to accept the words of Jesus about the reliability of God's law: "It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail" (Luke 16:17).

(3) Egypt could not have kept in subjection a people numbering over two million. Bernard Ramm asserts that all

<sup>14</sup>Ramm, *op. cit.*, pp. 81-83.

<sup>15</sup>G. E. Wright, *Biblical Archaeology* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1957), pp. 66-67.

Egypt had only about seven million people, and an army of not over twenty-five thousand. These could not have subjected such a host as 600,000 Israelites. Answer: If Egypt had counted every man in their country as a fighting man, as the Israelites did, Egypt would have had two million fighting men (even by Ramm's figures). But neither nation had *all* of their men armed and ready to fight at all times. In Egypt Israel was not armed to resist the domination of Egypt.

Furthermore, it is not necessary to assume that for one people to subjugate another, that they must greatly outnumber them. Small groups of well-armed, determined, and disciplined revolutionists have taken over whole nations frequently. The Egyptians had the upper hand over the Israelites. As long as that was the case, they did not need to outnumber the Israelites many times over in order to rule them.

(4) The word translated *thousands (eleph)* may also mean family, or clan, or tribal subdivision. Mendenhall suggests that the *eleph* was a "military unit." Thus, Israel supposedly had about six hundred families in its total population, with a population of perhaps six thousand. Others suggest up to twenty-five thousand.

Answer: This argument is weakened by the fact that the large total is broken down into twelve smaller tribal populations in Numbers. Most of the individual tribes numbered more than the total population conceded to Israel by advocates of the low total. Also we read in Joshua 8:3 that an Israelite army of thirty thousand attacked Ai. Five thousand more joined the army (Josh. 8:12). Surely this does not mean thirty families, plus five families.

(5) If Israel had a population of over two million, it would have been almost impossible for it to move as a unit. That many people walking five abreast with their cattle would likely make a speed of one mile per hour, and would take two hundred and thirty hours to pass a given point; and would need for bare subsistence nine hundred tons of food

daily. They could not have crossed the Red Sea in one night.

Answer: We certainly concede the logistical difficulties! This only makes us marvel the more at Moses' amazing ability as a leader to organize and direct this mob. However, it is not necessary to assume that the Israelites marched five abreast (though some have interpreted Ex. 13:18 to say that). They probably marched in a column at least a mile wide. The dry path across the Red Sea was probably a mile or more in width. The people could all see the pillar of cloud and fire which guided their movements (13:21-22). Daily travel instructions did not have to be handed down to every family.

28. *Who went out with the Israelites? (12:38-39)*

A mixed multitude<sup>16</sup> accompanied Israel out. A multitude means MANY. Also they were accompanied by flocks and herds and very numerous cattle. The reference to cattle indicates that the bondage of the Israelites did not extend to confiscation of livestock.

We do not know the racial identity of this mixed multitude. Possibly they were remnants of an old Semitic population left over from the Hyksos occupation. (The Hyksos were expelled in 1580 B.C.) Egyptian writings and paintings tell of numerous Amorites and other Asiatics who entered Egypt. Perhaps they were included in the mixed multitude. Moses' Cushite (Ethiopian) wife may have been included among these (Num. 12:1). We doubt that any Egyptians were part of the mixed multitude; their firstborn had all died in the Passover.

In a very similar manner, when the Jews nine centuries later came back from Babylonian captivity, there came unto them people from among the nations that were round about them (Neh. 5:17). Thus also the Gibeonites joined themselves to Israel (Joshua 9).

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<sup>16</sup>Mixed is from the same root as the word *swarms*, which refers to the plagues of flies in Ex. 8:21.



This mixed multitude proved to be a thorn in the flesh of the Israelites. They lusted (craved) for meat at Kibroth-Hattaavah, being dissatisfied with the manna (Num. 11:4-5). This caused a plague (Num. 11:33).

Why did the mixed multitude leave with Israel? We do not know for certain. Perhaps they had seen God's judgments in Egypt, and wished to escape any future judgments there. Perhaps they just followed the crowd. Many people still do that. When God's people are dominant and triumphant, there are always a lot of hangers-on to them. If there is a genuine Barnabas around, there will probably be Ananias and Sapphira also. Like a net full of mixed fish, or a grain field infested with tares, so God's congregation is often mixed (Matt. 13:25-30, 47-48).

Regarding the Israelites' unleavened bread and lack of victuals, see notes on 12:34.

29. *How long had Israel been in Egypt? (12:40-41)*

They had been there four hundred and thirty years. They came out at the *end* of four hundred and thirty years, on the very self-same day! This implies that there had been a record made of the exact year, month, and day when Israel came in. On that very day exactly four hundred and thirty years later they left. The existence of such a record need not astound us. The Egyptians were the most thorough record-keepers of all antiquity, and family records giving genealogies and business transactions spanning hundreds of years have been preserved.<sup>17</sup>

Note that the Israelites are called the "hosts of Jehovah." What a beautiful honor-bearing title! They were God's by creation and by purchase.

Although there are some problems associated with this four hundred and thirty year period, we believe it is the correct number.

For a study of "How Long Was Israel in Egypt?" see the

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<sup>17</sup>K. A. Kitchen, "Some Egyptian Backgrounds to the Old Testament," *Tyndale House Bulletin*, Nos. 5-6 (April 1960), pp. 14-18.

article at the end of this chapter.

30. *How were the Israelites to commemorate the night of their deliverance? (12:42)*

They commemorated it by an observance<sup>18</sup> to the Lord. "It is a night of observance to the Lord concerning (the way) He brought them from the land of Egypt. That night shall be an observance to Jehovah by all the sons of Israel, unto (all) their generations."

Ex. 12:42 appears to be an exhortation by Moses, inserted when he wrote the book of Exodus some time after the events of the Passover night. Ex. 12:42 leads directly into the instructions about the Passover in 12:43-49.

Notice that 12:42 states *twice* that that night was to be a night of *observance*. Future generations were to make special observance of that night. This should speak also to us about the great significance of the Passover observance, including its significance to Christians.

Skeptical critics see the duplication in Ex. 12:42 not as emphasis, but only as indication of multiple sources for Exodus. Driver ascribes Ex. 12:42 to "E" and calls it a "gloss" (an insertion). Oesterly and Robinson attribute it to "J" (in the "P" section 12:40—13:2). Noth does not separate 12:42 from the rest of the narrative. These authors make positive pronouncements about multiple authorship, but cannot agree even with one another.

31. *Why are supplementary instructions about the Passover given in 12:43-50?*

The reason for giving them here is not clearly stated. But since the instructions primarily concern the participation of foreigners in the Passover, and since a mixed multitude had left Egypt with Israel (12:38), we suspect that these instructions were given at this early point in Israel's journeys, perhaps at Succoth (12:37), to clarify to both Israelites and

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<sup>18</sup>The word-form *shimurim*, translated "to be observed," occurs only in Ex. 12:42. It is plural in form ("occasions to be observed"), though probably singular in meaning ("vigil," "observation"). It has a passive appearance (something to BE observed).

non-Israelites how His passover was to be observed.

Basically, the instructions were that a hired servant or sojourner (alien) living among the Israelites was *not* to partake of the Passover. A sojourner could partake if he consented to be circumcised. Observe the stress on the fact that there was ONE law for both strangers and for Israelites, when it came to eating the Passover (12:49).

Num. 9:14 refers to strangers keeping the passover "according to the statute of the passover." Probably this refers to the laws in Ex. 12:43-48.

The Passover belonged only to covenant-keepers. The instructions in 12:43-48 probably were uttered to persuade the non-circumcised fellow-travellers with the Israelites to get into Israel all the way, or to expect none of the blessings of Israelites. In our times people sometimes attend Christian worship meetings and activities, but never consent to be baptized and really get into the group. Much like the mixed multitude accompanying Israel, they enjoy God's people, but do not desire to acknowledge their need for further obedience.

The instructions about the Passover in 12:43-48 seem to be stated in seven (or six) laws.<sup>19</sup> These are stated succinctly and precisely, and in Hebrew each ends with the suffix *o* (meaning "him" or "it"). In condensed form the commands are as follows: a. No foreigner may eat (12:43). b. The circumcised may eat (12:44). c. No settler or hired servant may eat unless circumcised (12:45). d. Eat it in one house (12:46). e. All the congregation shall keep the feast (12:47). f. Let sojourners be circumcised (12:48). g. The circumcised aliens shall be accepted as are natives of the land (12:48). (The last two regulations may actually constitute only one.)

Certainly these instructions about the future observance of the Passover in Israel's future homeland gave much assurance to Israel that God surely intended to bring them into the land, where they would keep these ordinances. Christians likewise have clear promises about their activities in our

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<sup>19</sup> U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on Exodus* (Jerusalem, Magnes Press, 1967), p. 150.

eternal home in the new heaven and earth.

32. *What was the law about the bones of the Passover lamb? (12:46)*

Not a bone of it shall be broken. Compare Numbers 9:12. John 19:33-36 tells that this foreshadowed the fact that the bones of Christ (the true Passover lamb) would not be broken. It is not easy to imagine any other satisfactory explanation for this law.

The Greek wording of John 19:36 is quite similar to the Greek O.T. wording of Ex. 12:46. (The Greek text has the same law about not breaking the bones of the lamb in 12:10. The Hebrew text gives it only in 12:46.)

Psalms 34:19-20 also refers to the unbroken bones of the righteous. ("Righteous" is the singular, "the righteous one.") This verse applies in a general way to all of God's saints, but probably had a specific application to Christ, THE righteous one.

All three of the laws in 12:46 about the Passover lamb - eating it in one house, keeping all fragments of it in one place, and not breaking its bones - suggest the UNITY and integrity of the Passover lamb, and of Christ.

33. *To what chapter and verse does 12:51 refer back?*

It refers back to 12:41. Note the reference to the "selfsame day" in both 12:41 and 12:51. The interruption of 12:42-49 cleared up some of the relationships between the mixed multitude that left with Israel and Israel itself. Ex. 12:51 connects the following laws (in Ex. 13) about the firstborn to the preceding material.

Concerning the *hosts* of Israel, see notes on 7:4.

## SPECIAL STUDY: HOW LONG WAS ISRAEL IN EGYPT?

1. The Hebrew Bible says in Ex. 12:40-41, "The time that the children of Israel dwelt in Egypt was *four hundred and thirty years*. And it came to pass at the end of four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day, it came to pass, that all the hosts of Jehovah went out from the land of Egypt." We accept this statement without any qualification.
2. The statement of Stephen in Acts 7:6 is in basic agreement with the chronology in Exodus: "His (Abraham's) seed should sojourn in a strange land, and that they should bring them into bondage, and treat them ill, *four hundred years*." We suppose the number Stephen gave is a round number for the four hundred and thirty in Ex. 12.
3. God's, original covenant with Abraham in Gen. 15:13 foretold that Abraham's seed would be sojourners in a land that was not theirs, and that they would serve them; and that Abraham's seed would be afflicted *four hundred years*. Gen. 15:16 adds that Abraham's seed would return to Canaan "in the fourth generation." Seemingly this makes each of the generations referred to a hundred years long, which is unexpectedly long, but is not impossible.
4. The three foregoing scripture passages seem mutually harmonious. A problem arises when we consider the Greek O.T. (LXX), and the statement of Paul in Galatians 3:17.
5. The Greek O.T.<sup>1</sup> has in Exodus 12:40: "And the sojourning of the children of Israel, while they sojourned in the land of Egypt *and the land of Canaan* was four hundred and thirty years." The addition of the words *and in the land of Canaan* makes the four hundred and thirty years include the total time from Abraham's entry into Canaan until Israel's exodus from Egypt. Since two hundred and fifteen years elapsed from Abraham's entry into Canaan until Jacob's family came

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<sup>1</sup>The Greek O.T. was translated about 275 B.C., over a thousand years after the time of Moses. In most passages it is astoundingly close to the wording of existing ancient Hebrew manuscripts.

into Egypt, this would leave only two hundred and fifteen remaining years as the duration of the sojourn in Egypt (For scriptural chronological data, see Gen. 12:4; 21:5; 25:26; 31:38; 37:2; 41:46-47; 45:6; 47:9.)

As a general rule we regard the Hebrew Bible as being more authoritative than the Greek Bible. Also it seems very improbable that the scripture should refer to the sojourning of the *children* of Israel in *Canaan*, as the Greek O.T. does. How could Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob be referred to as children of themselves, or of their descendants? The children of *Israel*, or Jacob, sojourned in Canaan for only about twenty-two years of the two hundred and fifteen years from the time of Abraham's entry until Jacob's migration into Egypt. We do not regard the Greek Bible as correct in Ex. 12:40.

6. Josephus, the Jewish historian of the first century A.D., follows the Greek O.T. rendering: "They left Egypt . . . four hundred and thirty years after our forefather Abraham came into Canaan, but two hundred and fifteen years only after Jacob removed into Egypt" (*Ant.* II, xv, 2). Josephus is, however, contradictory with himself, because he also wrote, "Four hundred years did they spend under these afflictions" (referring to their Egyptian slavery). (*Ant.* II, ix, 1)
7. It might appear that the apostle Paul in Galatians 3:17 follows the Greek reading of Ex. 12:40, as opposed to the Hebrew reading. He writes as follows: "A covenant confirmed beforehand by God [referring to God's covenant with Abraham], the law, which came four hundred and thirty years after, doth not disannul, . . ." This sounds as if Paul meant that the law which was given at Mt. Sinai shortly after Israel left Egypt, was given four hundred and thirty years after God made his covenant with Abraham. The only reference in Genesis to God's *making* a covenant with Abraham is in Gen. 15:18. Abraham was approximately eighty-five years old at that time. (See Gen. 15:18.) If the four hundred and thirty years before the law was given (Gal. 3:17) started with this covenant in Gen. 15:18, then the 430 years would

include BOTH the time Israel was in Egypt AND in Canaan, as the Greek reading indicates.

8. We are persuaded that the Bible as originally written, and when properly understood, is always in harmony with itself. We believe also that Paul was a true apostle of Christ, and that his writings are therefore completely true, like all the other scriptures. We therefore feel that Gal. 3:17, when properly comprehended, will be in harmony with Ex. 12:40-41 and with the statement of Stephen (Acts 7:6), and all other passages.
9. It seems to us that the key to understanding Gal. 3:17 is to understand what Paul referred to when he spoke of the "covenant [with Abraham] *confirmed beforehand* by God." Is *pre-confirming* only a synonym for the *making* of the covenant? We think not. In Gal. 3:17 Paul uses the Greek verb *prokuroo* to describe this pre-confirming. This word means "to make valid, or sure, or firm, in advance." W. G. Moorhead says<sup>2</sup> that the word (*prokuroo*) is never employed in the New Testament, nor as far as we have discovered, in the Greek version of the Old, to designate the institution of a thing, a first transaction; it signifies to ratify, or confirm a thing already in existence. All of the references to *making* a covenant in the Greek Pentateuch (Gen.-Deut.) use some form of the verbs *tithemi* (to set, put, or place) or *histemi* (to cause or make to stand, to place, put, set). See Gen. 6:18; 9:9; 15:18; 17:2; Ex. 23:32; Jer. 31:31 (38:31 in Gr.) as examples.

The verb *kuroo* (root of *prokuroo*, which is used in Gal. 3:17) occurs only twice in the O.T. In Gen. 23:20 it refers to Abraham's purchase of the cave for burial being *made sure* after Sarah was buried in it. The original purchase is referred to by another word (in the Greek, but not in the Hebrew) in 23:16-17. This use of the verb *kuroo* tends to confirm our interpretation of its meaning as a later confirmation of a previous transaction.

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<sup>2</sup>Outline Studies in the Books of the Old Testament

The other use of *kuroo* is in Lev. 25:30. There the passage concerns the buying back of property sold by any one. In the case of a house in a walled city, there was a one-year time period in which it could be *redeemed* (bought back) from the purchaser. If it was not redeemed in that time, then the house was surely *confirmed* (*kuroo*) to him that bought it for all his generations. This use of *kuroo* shows the same meaning as in Gen. 23:20, the confirmation of a previous transaction.

10. What event could be referred to by Paul as a *confirming beforehand* of the covenant God made with Abraham? A careful reading of Gen. 15:13-21 (which tells of God's making the covenant with Abraham) reveals that the first words God spoke to Abraham were these: "Know of a surety that thy seed shall be sojourners in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them, . . ." The seed (descendants) of Abraham did not begin their sojourn in the land of Egypt till 215 years after Abraham entered Canaan. Abraham had died before his grandson Jacob migrated to Egypt with his family. But at the time when Jacob and his family entered into Egypt, the covenant with Abraham was truly confirmed, because God's first prediction in the covenant had come to pass. Four hundred and thirty years after this emigration into Egypt, God led the Israelites out, and gave them the law at Mt. Sinai. We feel that Paul was probably referring to this time period in Gal. 3:17.
11. I Chronicles 7:25 lists *ten* generations between Joseph and Joshua. Gleason L. Archer, Jr. writes that ten generations can hardly be reconciled with a mere two hundred and fifteen years (especially considering the longer life span of pre-Exodus Israelites), but it fits in very plausibly with an interval of four hundred and thirty years.<sup>3</sup>
12. Exodus 6:18-20 names only four generations from Levi to Moses - Levi, Kohath, Amram, Moses. As stated in our notes on this passage, we are practically forced to conclude

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<sup>3</sup>A *Survey of O. T. Introduction* (Chicago: Moody, 1964), p. 212.



that the names of some of the generations from Levi to Moses are not named here, because Levi's descendants numbered 22,000 just after the exodus (and the descendants of Kohath, Levi's son, alone numbered 8600 [Numbers 3:27].) Four generations cannot have produced that many descendants, especially since Levi himself had only three sons (Kohath, Gershon, Merari). Therefore, this genealogical listing does not argue against the four hundred and thirty-year sojourn in Egypt.

13. Finally, there is the argument from the population growth of the Israelites. When they came into Egypt, they numbered only seventy. When they left, there were over six hundred thousand men. Such a multiplication would require longer than two hundred fifteen years. Keil and Delitzsch report that the six hundred thousand population total could be obtained if every married couple among the Israelites produced three sons and three daughters for six generations, and then two sons and two daughters in the last four (making ten total) generations.<sup>4</sup> Such a population increase would have been possible in four hundred and thirty years, but extremely unlikely in two hundred and fifteen years.

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THE TEXT OF EXODUS  
TRANSLATION

**13** And Je-ho-vah spake unto Mo-ses, saying, (2) Sancitfy unto me all the first-born, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Is-ra-el, both of man and of beast: it is mine.

(3) And Mo-ses said unto the people, Remember this day, in which ye came out from E-gypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand Je-ho-vah brought you out from this

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<sup>4</sup>*Op. cit.*, Vol. 2, p. 30.