

Parashah 15

Bo



“Go”

Torah Together



Exodus 10:1 – 13:16

The plagues that God inflicts on Egypt continue in this week's *Parashah*, culminating with the tenth and final plague. Pharaoh finally relents and let's the Israelites go, but not before events occur that set the stage for all future workings of God with His people, including us.

1. The plague of Locusts - 10:1-20

a) Before this eighth plague, God tells Moses that He is hardening the hearts of Pharaoh and his officials for what purpose? What did He want Pharaoh to do?

“..so that I may perform these miracles....so that you may tell your children and grandchildren...so that you may know that I am YHWH.” God asks Pharaoh, “How long will you refuse to humble yourself before me?”

b) How did Pharaoh's officials (or advisors) respond? What was their view of the battle between God and Pharaoh?

Pharaoh's advisors pointed out that Egypt had suffered devastating losses because of Moses and the Israelites. They suggested that Pharaoh give in to their request, feeling that Pharaoh was losing his battle with YHWH, the God of the Israelites.

c) When Pharaoh spoke to Moses and Aaron again, what was his question? What was his proposed compromise? What 'evil' did he suspect them of?

Pharaoh wanted to know exactly which Israelites would be going to worship. He said only the men needed to go, leaving the women and children as hostages, assuring the men's return. When Moses refused, he accused them of 'evil', that is, trying to leave Egypt permanently.

Egypt's gods: Seth

The Egyptian god, Seth, was the god of storms and disorder. He was associated with crops because of the connection between storms and crops. Or perhaps the locust-headed god, Senehem, was intended here. During the plague, the locusts were so thick that the earth was darkened. The sun god, Ra, would have been shown to be impotent if he could not make it light during the middle of the day.

Pharaoh's Obstinacy

It's clear that Pharaoh still did not fear or respect the God of the Israelites. He did not hesitate to lie and not keep his word to God. Do you think that Pharaoh thought that he was more powerful than the Israelite God?

Egypt's gods: Amon-Ra

The sun god, Ra, was the chief of all the Egyptian gods. Pharaoh called himself "the son of the Sun" and thus claimed to be Ra's representative on earth. This then was the ultimate humiliation when neither Ra nor Pharaoh could overcome the profound darkness that God brought upon Egypt.

Egypt's gods: Pharaoh

Pharaoh himself was also worshiped in Egypt (as the son of Ra). By killing the firstborn son of all Egyptians, Pharaoh's eldest son and the presumed heir to the throne would be shown to be not only mortal, but subject to the will of the Israelite God. This would be God's final plague.

Scripture Link:

Does **Proverbs 16:18-19** seem to be a good description of Pharaoh's actions?

d) Describe this plague. What was Pharaoh's response? Do you think his confession of sin was heartfelt? How do you think he viewed YHWH?

A huge swarm of locusts blew in on an east wind and devoured all crops and trees not already destroyed by the hail. Pharaoh "quickly" summoned Moses and Aaron and said, "I have sinned against YHWH and against you." His motivation was simply to have the locusts gone. He still did not recognize YHWH as God and thought that He could be manipulated.

2. The plague of darkness - 10:21-29

a) This ninth plague seemed to come without forewarning Pharaoh. What impact do you think this plague had on the Egyptians' concept of Ra, the sun god?

Pharaoh was identified closely with Ra, the sun god. Such a deep, profound darkness must have made Pharaoh look quite impotent in the eyes of his believers.

b) This time, what was Pharaoh's offer to Moses? How did Moses respond? Do you think Pharaoh understood that the Israelites would not return?

This time Pharaoh offered to let all the Israelites go into the desert to worship YHWH, but they must leave their animals behind. Moses refused, saying, "Not a hoof is to be left behind." It seems that Pharaoh understood that the Israelites would be leaving for good.

3. The plague on the Firstborn - 11:1-10

a) How does God indicate to Moses that this would be the last plague? What special instruction does He give the people? Had God told this same thing to Moses before?

God tells Moses that after this plague, Pharaoh will let the people go, that they will be driven out. The Israelites are to ask their Egyptian neighbors for articles of silver and gold. God had told this to Moses at Sinai (Exodus 3:22).

b) Moses gives Pharaoh a full description of this plague and the results. Why do you think Pharaoh still refused to let Israel go?

Pharaoh basically refused because God had hardened his heart (verse 10), but he still wouldn't admit that he was no match for God. He didn't believe the God of the Israelites.

4. The Passover - 12:1-30

a) God instructs Israel to arrange their calendar around the month in which this plague occurs. Which month was this and what days were to be observed?

The first month of the Hebrew calendar was to be Abib (later changed to Nisan during Babylonian captivity). The Passover lamb was to be chosen on the 10th and taken care of until the 14th when it was slaughtered at twilight. More information on the Hebrew calendar will be covered in the study on Leviticus.

b) Detail the process of choosing, preparing, and consuming the Passover lamb. Note especially the times for these actions. What was to be done with the lamb's blood?

The lamb was a 1 year old unblemished male (goat or sheep) one for each family, shared with neighbors as necessary. The meat was roasted and eaten "in haste" with bitter herbs and unleavened bread. None was to be left over. The blood was to be smeared on the door posts and lintel of the house. (Note: A 1 year old sheep is almost full-grown and not the cute little lamb often pictured.)

c) Verses 14 - 20 describe the companion festival to Passover. What is it called and when and how is it to be observed?

The Feast of Unleavened Bread was celebrated from the evening of the 14th to the evening of the 21st by cleansing the home of leaven and consuming no leavened food for 7 days. Sacred assemblies were held on the first & last days.

" . . . He will see the blood on the top and sides of the door frame and will pass over that doorway, . . . "

Exodus 12:23

d) What reason did Moses give for setting Passover up as a "lasting ordinance"? Why is this important? Is this still done today?

In 12:26-27, Moses says when your children ask you why you observe this feast, you can tell them about how God struck down Egypt and "passed over" the Israelites. The feast is still observed some 3500 years later.

e) As this plague proceeded, who suffered? Why do you think the death of the Egyptians' firstborn sons might have been a suitable punishment for Egypt?

The Egyptians (and those without blood on their door posts) saw the death of their firstborn son. Earlier, Pharaoh had ordered the death of Israelite baby boys (Exodus 1:22). Do you think Pharaoh ever reflected on that tragedy?

Origin of "Passover"

The English word "Passover" was coined as a translation for the Hebrew word "Pesach." (Can you see why it was a good choice?) Passover is arguably the oldest continuously celebrated holiday in the world.

Spring Begins the Year

From other clues in this story, we know that these events occurred in the spring. In the original Hebrew calendar, the month of spring was known as "Aviv" or "Abib.", the Hebrew word for spring. In **Exodus 12:2**, God declares Aviv to be the first month of the year. (During the Babylonian Captivity, the month names were changed and Aviv became Nisan.)

Important Traditions

Traditions, like the celebration of holidays, serve at least two functions for a society. First, a time is set aside specifically to remember something important that happened in the history of the people. Second, since traditions can last many generations, the collective history of the society is preserved. This is certainly the case for Passover.

Planning Future Events

In addition to celebrating past events, all of God's "Holy Days" also foreshadow future events. (We'll learn more about this when we study Leviticus.) So while many of the actions commanded by God may have seemed unusual, they all had a reason behind them. However, this would not become apparent until later in history.

Scripture Link:

When God first appeared to Moses at the burning bush, He told him that the Israelites would "plunder" the Egyptians (**Exodus 3:21-22**). God **always** keeps His word.

A Mixed Multitude

According to **Exodus 12:38**, "many other people went up with them..." when they left Egypt. Given the devastating nature of the ten plagues, do you think it was likely that at least some of the general population would want to join the Israelites and their God?

f) Why do you think God prescribed all these actions to be taken by the Israelites in preparation for the Passover? What do you think the Israelites thought of this?

The elaborate process was meant to be a prophetic picture for future generations. The Israelites probably didn't understand it but were obedient because of the miracles that they had seen.

5. The Exodus - 12:31-42

a) When Pharaoh finally told Moses and Aaron that the Israelites could go, did he have any conditions? Why do you think he wanted their blessing (verse 32)?

With no preconditions, Pharaoh told the Israelites to hurry and leave, to take everything with them. He may have wanted their blessing because he also was a firstborn son and may have feared for his own life. He appears to have finally given up his struggle.

b) Why do you think the Egyptians were in a hurry to see the Israelites leave? What was significant about their bread? How did they 'plunder' the Egyptians?

The Egyptians were fearful; they'd had enough of the plagues. The Israelites' bread was unleavened, taken with them in the haste of their departure. The Egyptians gladly gave them articles of silver and gold because 1) God had predisposed them to do so and 2), because they wanted them to go.

c) About how many total Israelites do you think left Egypt? Who else do you think went with them? Why?

600,000 men implies ~1.5 to 2.0 million people. The "many other people" (verse 38) who went with them were Egyptians who had come to believe in YHWH.

d) How long had the Israelites spent in Egypt? Why do you think they were there so long?

The Israelites were in Egypt for 430 years. (There is some disagreement about this number.) For most of that time, they were comfortable in Egypt. Also, God needed 400 years for the "sin of the Amorites" to be complete (Genesis 15:16).

6. Passover Restrictions - 12:43-51

a) What four restrictions did God place on celebrating the Passover?

No uncircumcised foreigners may participate, it must be eaten indoors, no bones of the lamb are to be broken, and all Israel must celebrate it.

b) How do these restrictions foreshadow the Messiah? Do you think they still apply today?

Yeshua was sacrificed for believers in YHWH, none of his bones were broken, all believers, Jewish or Christian, should remember what God did for Israel in Egypt.

7. Consecration of the Firstborn - 13:1-16

a) What does the term “consecrate” mean? How were the firstborn males of the livestock to be consecrated to God?

Consecrated means ‘to be given to God’. Firstborn males of the livestock were to be sacrificed to God.

b) Were the firstborn sons of Israel also to be consecrated? How was this different than the consecration of the livestock?

As we will learn in Leviticus, the term consecrated used here has a special meaning – it involved sacrificing the object to God. In the case of clean animals, they were sacrificed to God. But for unclean animals and humans, God allowed for ‘redemption,’ the substitution of another object in place of the one to be sacrificed. So although firstborn sons were to be consecrated to God, they could be ‘redeemed’, i.e., not sacrificed. (See the explanation of Pidyon Ha’ben at the right.) The concept of redemption is important in God’s plan.

c) What was the purpose of the consecration of the firstborn? Does this still apply today? How does this foreshadow the Messiah?

The purpose is to remember that God took the firstborn male of all the Egyptians. Unless redeemed, the firstborn males belong to God. The concept of redemption is key to understanding the Messiah.

Scripture Link:

According to **Genesis 17**, circumcision was the sign that one was in covenant with the God of Abraham. In **Romans 2:25-29**, Paul explains that circumcision (participation in the covenant) is a matter of the heart. So as believers, we may celebrate Passover.

The Price of Salvation

Because of their obedience in applying the blood of the Passover lamb to their doorposts, the firstborn sons of the Israelites were spared death. However, these firstborn sons owed God their lives – they now “belonged” to God. This concept of belonging to God will be developed much more as we continue our *Torah* study.

Pidyon Ha’ben

The Hebrew term *Pidyon Ha’ben* literally translates to “redemption of the son.” In **Exodus 13:2**, God clearly states that the “first offspring of every womb among the Israelites belongs to me, whether man or animal.” In the case of clean animals, the first offspring are offered up as sacrifices. For unclean animals and for humans, the firstborn may be “redeemed” by paying a redemption price. This is a powerful lesson in the meaning of redemption, a concept central to God’s plan for mankind.

Digging deeper

1. The elaborate process of Passover was not for God, but for future generations. The celebration was meant to be a prophetic picture of God's plans, pointing to *Yeshua*. List all the parallels you can find between the Passover celebration and *Yeshua's* life.

Many parallels are possible: e.g., unblemished young male points to sinless young man; lamb chosen and kept for four days points to God's choosing Yeshua and keeping him for 4000 years before his sacrifice; lamb's blood shed for our salvation or redemption points to Yeshua's blood shed for the same reasons; lamb's bones not broken points to Yeshua's bones not broken. Many others are possible.

2. Not only did Passover foreshadow *Yeshua*, but *Yeshua* actually "became our Passover" (**John 1:29, 1 Corinthians 5:7**). From God's perspective, why was this necessary? (See **Hebrews 9:22, 28, 10:4; 1 Peter 1:18-20**)

One possible answer: God desires to have a personal relationship with his creation, man. Because of God's perfection, however, one must be sinless to enjoy such a relationship. As fallen human beings, this is not possible, so God defined a process by which one being could pay for the sins of another. The payment for sin is death, the shedding of blood. Thus, when one creature willingly gives his life for another, the payment for sin is made and a personal relationship with God is possible. For the Israelites, that creature was a lamb; for us, it is Yeshua.

Another idea to think about:

- ***When Adam & Eve sinned, God sacrificed an animal to provide skins for their clothing - one sacrifice per person.***
- ***When God saved the Israelites during Passover, they sacrificed the Passover lamb - one sacrifice per family.***
- ***When God set up the Levitical system, the 'scapegoat' was sacrificed for all the people - one sacrifice for the nation.***
- ***When Yeshua willingly gave his life, it was for all who would believe - one sacrifice for all mankind.***

The Passover was a key event in the lives of the Israelites and in God's plan for mankind. When they first arrived in Egypt as Jacob's extended family, they were just a nomadic tribe. As they left Egypt, they were a nation and on the way to fulfill their destiny, to play their role in God's grand plan. Passover also clearly foreshadowed the coming of the Messiah. And some believe that another "exodus" will occur in the future as God gathers His people from around the world to implement His Kingdom under the reign of the Messiah.

For further study, see

Haftarah : Jeremiah 46:13-28

Brit Hadashah : Luke 2:22-24; John 19:31-37; Acts 13:16-17;

Revelation 8:6 – 9:12; 16:1-21