

**Reformation Fellowship Notes • September 18, 2016**  
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**Handout #13**  
**Exodus 12:1-12:41**

**I. Introduction**

- A. I have talked about the plagues as a whole.
- B. Now I will talk about the tenth and final plague, the climax of the plague narrative.
  - 1. Clearly this is the most significant plague.
    - a) Longest section of the plague narrative
    - b) The one that is to be celebrated as a permanent ordinance
- C. This chapter is complex.
  - 1. Author is doing several things:
    - a) Giving instructions for what Israelites should do immediately
    - b) Establishing a tradition of festivals for perpetuity
  - 2. They are not clearly differentiated.

**II. Exodus 12:1-13**

- A. Moses announced the final plague to Pharaoh.
  - 1. Now he gives instructions to the people of Israel.
    - a) It is establishing an annual commemoration.
    - b) It is also giving them instructions for the immediate occasion.
      - (1) “In the land of Egypt”
        - (a) Rabbis take this to mean that these instructions were valid only for Egypt.
          - (i) Only the first Passover was celebrated this way.
      - (2) Presumably when Moses told Pharaoh that at midnight God was going to go out and kill the newborn, he was saying some day at midnight . . .
        - (a) The instructions given to the Israelites take several days to carry out.
- B. When will this commemoration take place (in the future)?
  - 1. When
    - a) Beginning of the year
      - (1) Different kinds of years
      - (2) This is the religious year.
        - (a) I think the religious year calendar relives the book of Exodus.
          - (i) Starts with Passover
    - b) When this plague happened
      - (1) March/April
    - c) On the tenth of that month
      - (1) Select a lamb
        - (a) One per household

- (i) Combine small households.
    - (b) Male lamb one-year-old without blemish (sheep or goat)
  - d) On the fourteenth day, kill it at twilight.
- 2. Rules for Egyptian Passover:
  - a) Each family kill animal at twilight.
  - b) Put blood from animal on doorposts and lintel.
  - c) Eat it that night.
    - (1) Roasted with fire
      - (a) Not raw or boiled
        - (i) Done quickly (Sarna)
        - (ii) Gets rid of all blood (Sarna)
        - (iii) Fire as purifying (me)
      - (2) With unleavened bread and bitter herbs
      - (3) Head, legs, and entrails
      - (4) What you don't eat, burn. Leave none of it.
        - (a) Sacrificial animal is completely devoted to its purpose.
    - d) Eat dressed and ready to go
      - (1) Loins girded
      - (2) Sandals
      - (3) Staff in hand
      - (4) Eat in haste.
        - (a) Great urgency
- 3. Why?
  - a) God is going to kill all first-born in Egypt.
    - (1) Only Israelites will be spared.
  - b) This is God's judgment against all the gods of Egypt.
    - (1) I am YHWH.
  - c) God will not strike houses marked with blood.
    - (1) "But every first born of my sons I redeem" (Exodus 13:15).

### III. Exodus 12:14-22

#### A. Feast of Unleavened Bread

1. Celebrate forever
2. A Feast to the Lord
3. A Memorial to you

#### B. How it will be celebrated?

1. On the first day, all leaven will be removed from your houses.
2. You will eat nothing with leaven for seven days.
  - a) Violators will be cut off from the people.
    - (1) They will cease to be a part of the community.
3. Two holy assemblies

- a) On the first day
  - b) On the last day
- C. Why will it be celebrated?
- 1. Because that is the day God brought the Israelites out of Egypt
    - a) “Hosts” (military term)
- D. When will it be celebrated?
- 1. The first month, the fifteenth day
    - a) The first day coincides with Passover

#### IV. Exodus 12:21-28

- A. Now that both Festivals have been commanded to Moses and Aaron, they command the Israelites to carry them out.
- 1. Every family take a lamb according to the instructions.
  - 2. Put blood on the lintel and door posts.
  - 3. Stay in your house all night.
    - a) Every house that does not have blood on the door posts will be visited by the destroyer.
  - 4. Observe this feast forever.
    - a) For your children
      - (1) This historical event needs to be remembered and knowledge of it must be passed from one generation to the next.
    - b) Observe it in the land.
      - (1) After you have received that which was promised
    - c) Children will ask what this feast is all about.
      - (1) It recognizes when God killed the first born in homes without the blood but spared those with blood
- B. The people did as they were instructed to do.

#### V. Exodus 12:29-32

- A. What happened
- 1. At about midnight
    - a) At the time of greatest darkness
  - 2. First born died
    - a) All classes of people, rich and poor
    - b) Men and cattle
    - c) Someone died in every house.
    - d) Pharaoh and his servants were affected.
  - 3. Pharaoh sent word to Moses.

- a) Word does not require that there be a meeting between Moses and Pharaoh (cf. Exodus 10:29).
- b) Pharaoh gave permission to the Israelites to leave.
  - (1) Asked that God bless him
    - (a) Pharaoh is a conflicted man.
      - (i) I have talked about this, but more about this later.

## VI. Exodus 12:33-39

- A. There is no longer any public support for the Pharaoh to keep the Israelites.
  - 1. The Egyptians are afraid they will die if Israelites do not leave.
  - 2. The Egyptians want the Israelites gone, and quickly.
  - 3. This is what forces Pharaoh to let them go.
- B. Leaving with urgency
  - 1. The Egyptian people want them to go immediately; they don't want to suffer any more.
  - 2. The Israelites want to leave while they have Pharaoh's permission.
    - a) He has given and then taken back his permission several times.
  - 3. They had to bake their bread before it rose and pack the kneading bowls.
  - 4. They received gold, silver, and clothes from Egyptians.
    - a) God told them to do so.
    - b) God moved the Egyptians to be inclined to give them wealth.
      - (1) Fear
      - (2) Sympathy
      - (3) Etc.
    - c) Thus they plundered the Egyptians.
      - (1) It is the prerogative of the conquerors to plunder the vanquished.
      - (2) This statement indicated the total conquest of the Egyptians by the Israelites.
        - (a) But it is a plundering without force or violence.
      - (3) The Rabbis justify this as wages due the Israelites for their slave labor.
        - (a) I don't see that justification is necessary.
        - (b) God distributes resources as he sees fit.
    - d) The Egyptian people are assuming that the Israelites are leaving for good.
- C. The Israelites set out.
  - 1. Headed toward Succoth
    - a) On the border of delta (Egypt) and Sinai (not Egypt)
    - b) Thought to be reference to either a region or a city (fort)
    - c) Means "tents"
      - (1) Thought to be a gathering place for nomadic shepherd people either coming or going from Egypt

- d) I will talk more about their route next week.
- 2. Large numbers in OT
  - a) 600,000 fighting men would mean two million total people, at least
  - b) The large numbers are impossibly large.
    - (1) If the numbers were as large as recorded, the narrative makes no sense.
      - (a) Not enough water in desert
      - (b) Canaanites would not have put up a fight against so many.
    - (2) How do we explain this then?
      - (a) Mistakes
        - (i) Errors of numbers are the most easily made in copying texts.
        - (ii) My collection of chain letters
      - (b) Change in the numbering system
        - (i) Word *aleph* had several meanings.
        - (ii) Meant 1,000
        - (iii) Also meant military unit
        - (iv) Size of military unit changed over time (like the British pound, or 2x4)
        - (v) If the military unit were changed to 50, there would have been 30,000.
      - (c) There must have been some change similar to this.
- 3. Mixed multitude
  - a) Some Egyptians went with the Israelites.
    - (1) This is quite remarkable.
      - (a) God must have moved in the hearts of some Egyptians to cause them to do what would otherwise have been inexplicable.
    - (2) The exodus marks the beginning of the formation of a nation, a people.
      - (a) From their very beginning, they included non-Abrahamites.
- 4. They took livestock with them.
  - a) This is a burden.
  - b) But it is an important source of food, wealth.
  - c) This was Pharaoh's last concession.
- 5. They had to leave quickly.
  - a) They don't know how long this window of opportunity will last.
  - b) They had not prepared any provisions.
  - c) They baked dough that they brought, but it had not risen.

## VII. Exodus 12:40-41

- A. This is a summary statement.
  - a) Reviewing the situation at this critical moment
- B. The children of Israel had been in Egypt for 430 years at this time.
  - a) "to the very day"
    - (1) Seems less likely
      - (a) If this is the meaning, God is attentive to details of the calendar.

- b) “that very day”
  - (1) The Israelites left Egypt the very day the deaths occurred.
    - (a) Things happened very quickly after all this time.
      - (i) 430 years without any apparent divine activity; then, all at once, they are freed.
- c) This fulfills what Abraham had predicted.
  - (1) Genesis 15:13-16

## VIII. Conclusion

### A. About the word “Passover”

- 1. It is used to refer to various things.
  - a) Etymology is uncertain.
  - b) It can refer to the original event.
  - c) It can refer to the celebration.
    - (1) Specifically, to the first day of the spring feast
    - (2) More generally, to the whole week of celebration—Passover, feast of the first fruits, and feast of unleavened bread
  - d) It can refer to the Passover lamb (Exodus 12:21).

### B. First Passover was unique.

- 1. Celebration of the Passover has varied over the years.
  - a) After the first two years, the Passover was not celebrated in the wilderness.
  - b) Before the temple, Passover was celebrated as a household.
    - (1) Later the lamb was sacrificed at the temple.
  - c) After the destruction of the temple (70 AD), the lamb is not sacrificed.
- 2. Distinctives of Egyptian Passover:
  - a) First day of Passover, the Israelites fled.
    - (1) Later that day was a sabbath.
  - b) Ate unleavened bread only the first day
    - (1) Later, for a whole week
  - c) Blood sprinkled on door posts
    - (1) Later, on the altar
  - d) No one allowed to leave the house that night
    - (1) Later, this was permitted.
  - e) Eat standing and ready to go.
    - (1) Eat reclining (sign of a freeman).

### C. Did God lie?

- 1. God told Moses just to ask for permission for the Israelites to go three days into the desert to worship YHWH.
  - a) It would have been abhorrent to the Egyptians to worship other gods while in Egypt (Exodus 8:26).
  - b) Such a request was not without precedent.
    - (1) We know that other workers received permission to have time off to worship their gods (Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt*, p. 115, 145).

- (2) There are records of individual slaves who were allowed to miss work to sacrifice to their gods (Ryken, p. 141).
2. Is God being deceptive?
    - a) Four possibilities:
      - (1) Moses was not obligated to tell the tyrant the truth. (Ryken, p. 141, lists this as a possible interpretation.)
      - (2) Everyone understood that the request for three days off was actually a request for freedom. (I can't remember where I saw this suggested.)
      - (3) It was typical Middle Eastern bargaining procedure (Stuart, p. 161; Mackay p. 104).
        - (a) He cites the event in Genesis 23 where Abraham buys a tomb to bury Sarah.
      - (4) God was making a lesser request to show that Pharaoh was so stubborn that he would not even do that.
    - b) In any case, Pharaoh and the Egyptians seem to assume that the Israelites would not come back.
      - (1) Pharaoh gives permission for them to go on two occasions as long as something is left behind to force them to come back.
      - (2) By the time they left, everyone, including the Egyptians, understood that they would not come back.
    - c) As things unfolded, they left as conquerors, which gave them the right to leave for good.
- D. Pharaoh asked for a blessing.
1. He is conflicted.
    - a) When he is suffering; he is contrite.
    - b) When the pressure is off, he is defiant.
  2. If Pharaoh is viewed as a bad guy (and he is), what is the nature of his wrong?
    - a) Stubbornness?
      - (1) He is stubborn,
        - (a) but stubbornness is not inherently wrong.
        - (b) Job is stubborn.
    - b) His stubbornness is born out of arrogance.
      - (1) He refuses to bow down to the God who is there.
        - (a) He has had much evidence that YHWH is the God of the universe.
          - (i) Signs, plagues (predicted and then carried out)
        - (b) He is willing to receive benefits from YHWH.
          - (i) But he is unwilling to be subservient to YHWH.
    - c) What he needs is humility.
      - (1) Recognition that he is the creature, and God is the loving creator
        - (a) We are at God's mercy for absolutely everything.
        - (b) In all things, our attitude should be what Jesus' attitude was: not my will but your will be done.