

mind us that to be like Jonathan we need to be in covenant relationship with the anointed, and actively to obey the commandment of God.

As mentioned in the first article, it is recorded five times that Jonathan loved David, and, whilst a profound love for Christ enables us to love others unselfishly, yet the words of our Lord are

pertinent: "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple" (Lk. 14:26,27).

(Concluded)



## Exposition

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# The Exodus

## A commentary on Exodus 1–15

### G. The final plague and the Passover (Exodus 11–13)

#### Part 2: Passover legislation—Exodus 12:1-28 (ii)

Mark Vincent

#### The format of the commentary

The narrative has been broken down into several **major sections**, of a chapter or two each; some of these will be covered in one month, others will take longer. An **Introduction** is provided for each of these major sections, which sets out the major events and themes dealt with in those chapters.

Each major section is broken into **sub-sections** or **episodes** (these are typically between five and twenty verses each). For each the **AV text** is followed by a **Comment**, which draws out the major lessons and items of interest from the text. The AV text also contains **Footnotes**, in which additional 'one-off' points are made for those wanting to work through Exodus more slowly.

**G**OD'S INSTRUCTIONS as to what Moses is to tell Israel concerning the Passover, consideration of which began [last month](#), now move from the Passover meal itself to the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The account of Moses passing this information on to the elders of Israel (12:21-28) then provides further details not given before concerning Passover night itself.

#### Unleavened bread

- 12:15 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 Israel.
- 12:16 And in the first day there shall be an holy convocation,<sup>1</sup> and in the seventh day there shall be an holy convocation to you; no manner of work shall be done in them, save that which every man must eat, that only may be done of you.
- 12:17 And ye shall observe the feast of unleavened bread;<sup>2</sup> for in this selfsame day<sup>3</sup> have I brought your armies out of the land of Egypt: therefore shall ye observe this day in your generations by an ordinance for ever.
- 12:18 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.
- 12:19 Seven days shall there be no leaven found in your houses: for whosoever eateth that which is leavened, even that soul shall be

cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he be a stranger, or born in the land.

12:20 Ye shall eat nothing leavened; in all your habitations shall ye eat unleavened bread.

### Comment

In this remarkably repetitious passage a number of basic points are made several times over:

- The feast lasts seven days, beginning on the evening of the 14th (that is, the occasion of the Passover meal when unleavened bread was to be eaten). The Feast of Unleavened Bread thus appears to begin at the transition between the 14th and 15th days, and lasts to the end of the 21st day (that is, days 15-21 inclusive). Both the 15th and the 21st were to be holy convocations, in which no work was to be done apart from food preparation (vv. 15-20).
- Leaven has to be completely purged from their dwellings so that there is not even a hint of it. There will be no surreptitious or accidental partaking of leaven; it is to be totally eliminated (vv. 15,19).
- Anyone who eats leaven will be cut off from (the congregation of) Israel. This could mean death or exclusion (vv. 15,19).

Ignorance of these laws is no excuse, even if the transgressor is a stranger. All are to know these Divine principles—a point which stresses the importance of *education* and *witnessing* to the truths of God. The feast is to be observed: “therefore shall ye observe this day . . . by an ordinance for ever” (v. 17); compare the similarly formulaic language used of the Passover meal in verse 14. It is also to be understood.

But what was the significance of the feast? In answering this we probably need to go in several directions (which are not necessarily mutually exclusive):

- 1 When the time came to leave, the Israelites were in such a hurry that they “took their dough before it was leavened, their kneadingtroughs being bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders” (v. 34). There was no dawdling; the impression is very clearly of them hastily grabbing all they could (even the uncooked dough!) and departing at once. They went in such haste that they did not even have time to finish preparing their food in the normal manner: “And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they brought forth out of Egypt, for it was not

leavened; *because* they were thrust out of Egypt, and could not tarry, neither had they prepared for themselves any victual” (v. 39).

In this sense, then, the commemorative eating of unleavened bread for a whole week recalled the *haste* of their departure from Egypt and the *urgency* to leave. They were not able to make provision for the flesh, they simply grabbed what was to hand and left as fast as they could. They were unprepared for the journey (it would be like an Englishman leaving for a picnic, but just grabbing an uncut loaf and a jar of marmalade on the way out of the door). Yet they survived because the goal of leaving was greater and more urgent than having proper provisions prepared in the normal way.

The disciple today must likewise appreciate the urgency of leaving Egypt behind, and must get out as fast as possible. There ought to be no time to make provision for the flesh, for the hurry to leave is greater. To commemorate this principle in a week-long feast would carry a powerful message.

- 2 In Deuteronomy 16:3 unleavened bread is also called “bread of affliction”. It is a bread which is associated with Egypt and the suffering that was borne there. It is a deprived bread, a bread which has not had the addition of an ingredient and has therefore not undergone a process and taken on a dimension that it normally would have. Perhaps there is mileage in considering unleavened bread from this perspective.
- 3 Leaven, or yeast, is a powerful agent of change: “a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump” (1 Cor. 5:6). In a matter of hours, leavened dough has doubled or trebled in size, and the finished loaf is entirely different in texture and appearance from an unleavened loaf. (The Indian naan bread is perhaps something akin to the type of unleavened bread the Hebrews might have eaten; in all probability it had little in common with the dry matzos crackers used by Jews as unleavened bread today.)

But this Passover meal, and what it portrays, is without leaven. It is timeless and without change. God’s act of deliverance that is being commemorated in this whole period is decisive and irrevocable. From this perspective also, then, a Feast of Unleavened Bread has its relevance. Most of the sacrifices under the Law had to be offered with salt. In

a certain sense salt is the opposite of leaven, for it is a preservative which causes the food to which it has been added to resist change. Leaven, by contrast, encourages change. Like the sacrifices, the Passover meal and the Feast of Unleavened Bread celebrated something constant and unchanging.

- 4 Leaven is frequently (some would say always) associated with sin in the Scriptures. In a deliberate allusion to the Passover, Paul speaks of the leaven of malice and wickedness which has to be purged away so that the feast may be kept in sincerity and truth (1 Cor. 5:6-8). The sacrificial animal had to be without blemish, and the bread that was eaten with and subsequent to it also had to be eaten, spiritually speaking, without the corrupting and maiming influence of sin. The Feast of Unleavened Bread thus evokes the sinless provision that God has made, and the sinless state we may be ascribed through association with it. It speaks, too, of the sinless lives for which we must strive as we purge out the old leaven and endeavour to follow our Father's will more perfectly.

The seeking out and purging of all leaven and leftover dough from the house provides a helpful spiritual picture. The house was to be completely emptied of any trace; there was to be no contamination from leaven's power to change. It speaks of the periodic need to search systematically even the very corners of one's everyday life and habit to ensure that nothing can be found that ought not to be there. Everything that might have the power to change us from that which God would have us be must be sought out and removed. Unfortunately, when we do search our lives (or even our physical houses, for that matter), many of us find that there are far too many things that would cause us to be changed from the fashion of the image of Christ in just the way that, theoretically, we would seek to avoid. The challenge must be taken up.

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### Moses informs Israel

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- 12:21 Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel, and said unto them, Draw out and take you a lamb according to your families, and kill the passover.
- 12:22 And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop,<sup>4</sup> and dip it in the blood that is in the bason, and strike<sup>5</sup> the lintel and the two side posts with the blood that is in the bason; and none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning.
- 12:23 For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when He seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the LORD will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer<sup>6</sup> to come in unto your houses to smite you.
- 12:24 And ye shall observe this thing for an ordinance to thee and to thy sons for ever.
- 12:25 And it shall come to pass, when ye be come to the land which the LORD will give you, according as He hath promised, that ye shall keep this service.
- 12:26 And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service?
- 12:27 That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the LORD'S passover, Who passed over<sup>7</sup> the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when He smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses. And the people bowed the head and worshipped.<sup>8</sup>
- 12:28 And the children of Israel went away, and did as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron, so did they.

### Comment

Moses now passes on to the elders of Israel the instructions that God has given him pertaining to the Passover. The elders then pass these to the people, and it would presumably be the responsibility of the father in each house to ensure that his family understood what was to take place. Most of the details recorded here repeat what we have seen in the earlier passage (vv. 3-14) in terms of informational content, so they will not be examined again here. Several details are additional, however, and these are as follows:

- The blood is to be placed in a basin and daubed upon the doorpost and lintel with a bunch of hyssop.
- No one is to go through the doorway and out of the house until the morning. (This 'don't stray outside' principle is echoed in the New Testament's teaching about remaining in the fold, and in the family's remaining in the Ark during the Flood.)
- The blood is seen by the Lord, Who therefore does not permit the 'destroyer' to smite.

The whole Passover celebration is described as an "ordinance" and a "service", one which is to be kept for ever (vv. 24,26). The everlasting nature of the remembrance is referred to on many

occasions throughout chapters 11–13, and brings to mind the once-for-all nature of what God was bringing to pass for His people. God’s people must never forget the magnitude of His salvation. There is nothing else to be commemorated if this is taken away or forgotten.

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1. **v. 16 convocation.** The term *miqra*, ‘convocation’, occurs twice in this verse but nowhere else in Exodus, although it is common in Leviticus and Numbers. It derives from the root *qara*, ‘to call’, and refers to a gathering to which people are called; it commonly appears with the adjective ‘holy’ as a technical term for a religious gathering or sacred assembly.
  2. **v. 17 ye shall observe [the feast of] unleavened bread.** The words “the feast of” are in parenthesis (italics in the AV) because they do not actually appear in the Hebrew text but are supplied by the translators to make sense of the passage in English. Although their understanding is probably correct, traditional Jewish interpretation takes the phrase to mean, “you shall observe [guard] the unleavened bread”, and prescribes on that basis a procedure for the making and keeping of the bread to make absolutely sure that no fermentation takes place.
  3. **v. 17 this selfsame day.** This would seem to refer to the 15th ([see comment](#)).
  4. **v. 22 hyssop.** The assumption that the plant is hyssop comes from the Septuagint, which translates the Hebrew term in that way. The original reference was perhaps to Syrian hyssop, however, which we know as marjoram (so Propp’s commentary); its brushlike character makes it ideal as an applicator. In the Bible, hyssop/marjoram is frequently used in rituals of cleansing, sprinkling and purification. One of its uses was in the rite of purification of the leper and the leprous house (Lev. 14). Other instructive references include Numbers 19:18, Psalm 51:7, and Hebrews 9:19.
  5. **v. 22 strike.** Unlike verse 7, the verb here is the verb ‘touch’, ‘strike’. In verse 7 it was the verb ‘give’, although the AV translates as ‘strike’ in both cases. ‘Touch’ is also used in Exodus 4:25, where Zipporah ‘touches’ or ‘casts’ the foreskin ([see commentary](#) there for the meaning of that passage and the possible connection with 12:22).
- The related noun is also used in 11:1 as God promises one last ‘stroke’ upon the Egyptians (“one *plague* more”).
6. **v. 23 the destroyer.** The AV is a good translation, and the term might be taken as a title for a role or position carried by a particular angel appointed by God to carry out the execution of the first-born. Notice that it is the Lord Who passes through, sees and passes over, and it is He who controls the destroyer by ‘not suffering’ him to come in to smite the protected houses of the Israelites. There is no scope here, then, for a demonology. The destroyer is simply an agent of God, an angel, carrying out the task of execution. It is the Lord Himself Who is the real actor in the passage. The term also occurs in 2 Samuel 24:16 and 1 Chronicles 21:15 to describe the destroying angel whose outstretched hand was stayed over Jerusalem as David offered sacrifice on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite following David’s foolish numbering of the people. There the participle occurs with the word ‘angel’ (‘the angel the destroyer’, ‘the angel who destroyed’ or ‘the destroying angel’). Ezekiel 9:8 is also significant. Ezekiel pleads with God; “Alas, O LORD my Lord; will You be the destroyer of all the remnant of Israel?”, is how it can be rendered. Other relevant passages where the same idea is found (if not the precise same terminology) include Genesis 19 (Sodom and Gomorrah); Exodus 4 (God seeks to kill Moses/Gershon); Numbers 22:22-35 (Balaam); 2 Kings 19:35 (an angel smites the Assyrians); and Psalm 35:5,6 (“let the angel of the Lord persecute/chase them”).
  7. **v. 27 passover . . . passed over.** This passage provides the explanation of the term ‘passover’ through an obvious wordplay. The verb *pasach* (translated here as ‘passed over’) means ‘to skip’, ‘hobble’, ‘limp’ or ‘be lame’. The verb translated ‘pass through’ in verse 23 is unrelated.
  8. **v. 27 the people bowed the head and worshipped.** Compare the identical response in 4:31. On occasion, Israel showed the perfect attitude in response to the leadership of God through His servant Moses. It was a response first shown in the Scriptures by Abraham’s servant (Gen. 24:26,48), and it is used of Moses himself as he beholds the revelation of the Name and glory of God in Exodus 34:8. There are also a number of instructive occurrences in Chronicles.

“Men are on all hands imperfect, and, of course, brethren too; and if we do not clothe ourselves with something of divine magnanimity that puts up with the frailties and shortcomings of human nature, we shall never get on at all”—*Robert Roberts*.