

Exodus Chapter 13

Verses 2-10: Further explanation tied their departure to the divine promise of entrance and residence in a new land where commemoration of the Exodus would occur through annual observance of this 7 day feast. Again, the instructional opportunity afforded was not to be overlooked (verses 8, 16).

Exodus 13:1-2 "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying," "Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, [both] of man and of beast: it [is] mine."

“Sanctify unto me all the firstborn”. Since the firstborn of Israel, of both man and animal, were untouched by the tenth plague; it was fitting that they be set aside as special unto God. Note the closing emphasis: “it is mine”. Further instruction followed on the law relating to the firstborn males once they were in their assigned territory (verses 11-16). This divine demand was closely linked to the day of departure (12:51).

“The selfsame day” and the Feast of Unleavened Bread (verse 3).

“This day came” ... month of Abib” (verse 4).

Where Christ was referred to as Mary’s firstborn (see Luke 2:7).

This is commanded because the Lord had spared the firstborn of Israel when the Egyptian firstborn children were destroyed. Appropriately the firstborn of men and animals were to be “set apart” for His service.

Sanctify means to be separated from sin and devoted wholly to God. At Creation, God set apart the Sabbath (Gen. 2:3), for Himself and His own purposes. Here, the Lord consecrated the “Firstborn ... of man and of beast” (13:11-16). Later, the tabernacle would be designated as the set-apart place of God (Chapter 25).

Here we see an unusual statement about the firstborn being sanctified (set aside), for the Lord. This probably meant the first male child although the word translated "man" here, means mankind. We know that the firstborn in Egypt were killed as the tenth plague against Egypt by God. We also know that this was not limited to people, but to animals as well. Here again, we see the firstborn of animals set aside for God. We will see when the law was given on the way to the Holy Land, where God sets up the Levitical tribe to take the place of the firstborn of every family.

Exodus 13:3 "And Moses said unto the people, Remember this day, in which ye came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the LORD brought you out from this [place]: there shall no leavened bread be eaten."

The day that gave them a national existence and introduced them into the privileges of independence and freedom, deserved to live in the memories of the Hebrews and their posterity. And considering the signal interposition of God displayed in it, to be held not only in perpetual, but devout remembrance.

"House of bondage": Literally, "house of slaves", that is, a servile and degrading condition.

"For by strength of hand the Lord brought you out from this place": The emancipation of Israel would never have been obtained except it had been wrung from the Egyptian tyrant by the appalling judgments of God. As had been at the outset of his mission announced to Moses (Ex 3:19).

"There shall no leavened bread": The words are elliptical, and the meaning of the clause may be paraphrased thus: "For by strength of hand the Lord brought you out from this place, in such haste that there could or should be no leavened bread eaten."

Moses was God's spokesman to these people, and the messages that Moses gave them, was from God. This probably was said at the end of the first day's journey. He was saying, "Now that we are on our way, don't forget that it was God that brought you out." Moses wanted them to be thankful to God alone for their deliverance. Indirectly, Moses was reminding them to lay the gods of Egypt down and be true to the one true God that overcame all of the false religions and brought them out with power. This eating of unleavened bread, to me means, "clean your life up and stay free from sin". "Leaven" is symbolic of sin. God was trying to impress them not to have sin in their lives.

Exodus 13:4 "This day came ye out in the month Abib."

April. Compare (Exodus 12:2). Abib means "green ears of corn," or "greenness." And the month of Abib was that in which the wheat came into ear, and the earth generally renewed its lush green vegetation. It was a "vague" or shifting month, since it properly began with the day of the full moon that followed next after the vernal equinox. It retained its name until the Babylonian captivity, when the Babylonian name Nisan superseded the original one (Neh. 2:1; Esther 3:7).

"Abib" means tender, young, green or tender green ears of corn. This is just telling us what time of year this was. Abib would be the first month on the Jewish calendar. It would be in early spring. Our month of April is the same month.

Exodus 13:5 "And it shall be when the LORD shall bring thee into the land of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, which he sware unto thy fathers to give thee, a land flowing with milk and honey, that thou shalt keep this service in this month."

Five nations only are named in this passage, whereas six are named (in Exodus 3:8), and ten in the original promise to Abraham (Genesis 15:19-21). The first word "Canaanite" is generic, and includes all the Hamite races of Palestine.

“This service”: Spoken of before, and also in the following verses. From this place, it is evident the Israelites were not obliged to this service in the wilderness without a particular command from God (see Deut. 12:1).

Here we see a reassurance that God was going to remove the families in this Promised Land, and that the Israelites would truly inherit this land, and that it would be a productive land of milk and honey.

Exodus 13:6 "Seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread, and in the seventh day [shall be] a feast to the LORD."

Compare (Exodus 12:16), where a “holy convocation” is ordered for the seventh day. The Jews regard this day, the twenty-first of Abib, as the anniversary of the passage of the Red Sea.

"Seven", as we have mentioned so many times before, shows spiritual completeness. Here we see again that was truly what it indicated. This seventh day was like a very special holiday of no work, only worship. The first and the seventh day of this time were to be especially holy days.

Exodus 13:7 "Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days; and there shall no leavened bread be seen with thee, neither shall there be leaven seen with thee in all thy quarters."

“And there shall no leavened bread be seen with thee, neither shall there be leaven seen with thee in all thy quarters”: (see notes on Exodus 12:15). They begin before the passover, with all the diligence and care they can, to put away all leaven. Or anything that hath had leaven in it, out of their houses, and out of their power. Searching all their cupboards and bins, and cleansing the whole house and whiting it all over. And they provide themselves also of new utensils for their kitchen and table; or else they make the old like new again. And scour them well; or else they have a select number of vessels set apart for the use of the passover only. That so they may be certainly assured that they use not anything during those eight days that hath had leaven in it.

Some believe that every word of the Bible must be taken literally and that we should not attempt to see into the spiritual, but I believe if we look at the spiritual, we will find a hidden treasure. This was spoken again, to emphasize the importance of these people of God not having leaven inside of them, or not to even find leaven in their homes. Again, the seven days I believe, just show that if we are to please God, we will keep sin (leaven) out of our personal life and we will even keep it out of our homes. Jesus is coming back for a chaste virgin without spot or wrinkle. Jesus is not coming back for those who are practicing sin as a way of life and I believe that is the spiritual message we are to receive. Not only in this verse, but in this whole chapter. It was repeated because it was important.

Exodus 13:8 "And thou shalt show thy son in that day, saying, [This is done] because of that [which] the LORD did unto me when I came forth out of Egypt."

“Unto me when I”: A personalized application of God’s working belonged to the first generation that experienced the Exodus. Later generations could only say “unto me when I” in the sense of our nation, but without loss to the significance of how God had brought about such an important

day in the nation's history. Note the personalized application of the law of the firstborn as well (verse 15), "I sacrifice ... my children I redeem".

In each successive generation, Passover would be a teaching opportunity within the family. "This is done because that which the Lord did unto me", with all members considering themselves present with their ancestors at the Exodus "when I came forth out of Egypt".

We see that it was the obligation of the father to tell his son about God. This should be passed from one generation to the next. Not only were they to teach the next generation to observe this feast, but they were to teach them why they were observing this time. Unless parents take the time to teach the next generation, the feast would be overlooked, and it would be greatly displeasing to God.

Exodus 13:9 "And it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes, that the LORD'S law may be in thy mouth: for with a strong hand hath the LORD brought thee out of Egypt."

The word "sign" has been the subject of some speculation. Due to this verse and Deuteronomy 6:8 and 11:8 the Jews have concluded that this meant literally wearing pouches called tephillin, a term explained to mean prayers. The Greek designation was phylakterion (Matthew 23:5), from which the English word "phylactery" has been derived. It consisted of small pouches made from the skin of ceremonially clean animals. Sewn to leather bands by which they were strapped to the forehead between and immediately above the eyes, and to the left arms, of males who had reached the age of 13. Inside the pouches, certain passages of the Law were written (13:2-10; Deut. 6:4-9; 11:13-21).

Many believe that this was speaking of the Phylacteries (little box of Scriptures), that the Hebrews wore on their forehead, or on their arm. I really believe that it means to keep it in your mind and before you at all times. If it is in your mind and heart, it will be in your mouth. Phylacteries were strips of parchments with Scriptures written on them and carried in little boxes in the center of the foreheads and the left arms. The benediction used when putting these on is, "Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with the commandments and enjoined us to put on phylacteries".

You see, if you are looking at the Bible from the literal standpoint, we might even do this today. I believe what is being said in this, is keep the teachings of God in your mind and in your heart, or constantly before you. God delivered the Israelites (nothing they did brought them out). God delivers the Christians through grace as nothing we do saves us.

Exodus 13:10 "Thou shalt therefore keep this ordinance in his season from year to year."

Not the ordinance of the phylacteries, as the Targum of Jonathan, but the ordinance of unleavened bread.

"From year to year": Every year successively, so long as in force, even unto the coming of the Messiah. It is in the Hebrew text, "from days to days"; that is, either year after year, as we

understand it; or else the sense is, that the Feast of Unleavened Bread, when the season was come for keeping it, was to be observed every day for seven days running.

This was not something to take casually. It must be remembered every year.

Exodus 13:11-12 "And it shall be when the LORD shall bring thee into the land of the Canaanites, as he sware unto thee and to thy fathers, and shall give it thee," "That thou shalt set apart unto the LORD all that openeth the matrix, and every firstling that cometh of a beast which thou hast; the males [shall be] the LORD'S."

In remembrance of the Lord's preservation of Israel's first sons, the "firstling ... shall be the Lord's", yet only firstborn sons were to be redeemed (verse 13).

We see here again, that the firstborn male child and animal were to be set aside for the Lord. This would be the responsibility of the father of the family, to see that this was done.

Exodus 13:13 "And every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb; and if thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break his neck: and all the firstborn of man among thy children shalt thou redeem."

Most firstborn male animals were to be sacrificed, except those that were considered ritually unclean (such as "an ass").

We see the beast of burden (ass), was to be redeemed, so it could carry their goods. The lamb here too, was the sacrifice. A firstborn son, later on, would be redeemed with five shekels of the sanctuary. If the ass was not redeemed for use as a beast of burden, then it was to be killed. The owner was not to profit from the firstborn ass. Killing him cost the owner.

Exodus 13:14 "And it shall be when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What [is] this? that thou shalt say unto him, By strength of hand the LORD brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage:"

This is added to teach parents in all succeeding ages, that it is their duty to instruct their children in the word and works of God, and in the nature and reasons of every particular kind or part of God's worship and service (see Deut. 15:5; Psalm 66:4; Hosea 2:14).

When their sons asked why they keep this? All they were to say was, "Give God the glory for it all".

Exodus 13:15 "And it came to pass, when Pharaoh would hardly let us go, that the LORD slew all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man, and the firstborn of beast: therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all that openeth the matrix, being males; but all the firstborn of my children I redeem."

The firstlings of beast not used in sacrifice, were to be changed for others so used, or they were to be destroyed. Our souls are forfeited to God's justice, and unless ransomed by the sacrifice of

Christ, will certainly perish. These institutions would continually remind them of their duty, to love and serve the Lord. In like manner, baptism and the Lord's Supper, if explained and attended to, would remind us, and give us occasion to remind one another of our profession and duty (see Luke 2:23).

Here we see the entire reason for sacrificing the firstborn of all the animals to God was in remembrance of God sparing the firstborn of the Israelites on the night all the firstborn of Egypt was slain. The reason the Hebrew firstborn children were to be redeemed (bought back), was because they too, belonged to God. God did not require the Hebrews to sacrifice the firstborn children, but to redeem them from the law. Jesus is the firstborn of God; Jesus redeemed us from the curse of the law.

Exodus 13:16 "And it shall be for a token upon thine hand, and for frontlets between thine eyes: for by strength of hand the LORD brought us forth out of Egypt."

Later the Jewish people tied phylacteries, prayer boxes, "for a token" of this on their left arms and foreheads ("frontlets between thine eyes").

One more time, they were told to keep reminding themselves that God brought them out. They must keep the remembrance in their minds and hearts.

Exodus 13:17 "And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not [through] the way of the land of the Philistines, although that [was] near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt:"

"Through the way of the land of the Philistines": Travelers going east and northeast out of Egypt had two good options: "the way of the sea," or the way of Shur." The first route, the most direct and shortest, was dotted with Egyptian fortresses which monitored arrivals and departures to and from Egypt. A little further north, Philistine territory also presented a military threat. The lack of battle-readiness on Israel's part deleted the first option, and God chose the second option (verse 18; 15:22). In any case, God had told Moses to lead the people to Horeb or Sinai, the mountain of God (3:1), and not to take them immediately into Canaan (3:12).

The "near" route to the Promised Land involved heading east around the curve of the Mediterranean Sea, then north through the "land of the Philistines".

God knew the Philistines would put up a fight and He knew these people were so whipped down from their bondage in Egypt, that they were not ready to fight a battle, so He sent them the long way. Egypt was bad, but they were not ready for war. They might have given up and gone back to Egypt. Their fight was gone.

Exodus 13:18 "But God led the people about, [through] the way of the wilderness of the Red sea: and the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt."

The longer “wilderness” route that “God led” them on may have seemed strange, but the Hebrew people needed time to become an organized nation fit for war. God’s way is always best, even when it takes His people through the wilderness.

The location of “the Red Sea” crossing has produced much debate. Several views have been proposed:

- (1) The crossing was near the northern end of the Gulf of Suez;
- (2) It was near Lake Timsah or the southern extension of the present Lake Menzaleh;
- (3) The sea was located in the northern delta region, perhaps at Serbonitis;
- (4) The crossing was in the Bitter Lakes region, known for its marshes and reeds, as the Hebrew reflects (yam sup, “Sea of Reeds”).

The advantage of this last view is that such a route would have led them immediately to the wilderness of Shur after their crossing, and it would also have coincided with a three-day trip as (in 15:22). In any case, it was a miraculous crossing in deep water.

That God’s people left Egypt “harnessed” suggests that they had a plan in place, presumably backed by much earnest prayer, for the time when Pharaoh would actually let them go.

Every Christian on the way to the Promised Land must cross the wilderness first. This would be a time of real testing. A time to get them separated into the true followers of God from those who were following for what they could get. Even though God brought them the long way, it was still less dangerous than open war with the Philistines. God brought them out this way to teach them His ways. "Harnessed" just means that they moved out orderly in five smaller groups as an army would move. The smaller groups they would have to overcome in the desert, would be conditioning them.

Exodus 13:19 "And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him: for he had straitly sworn the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you; and ye shall carry up my bones away hence with you."

Joseph’s last words were that he wanted his “bones” taken to the Promised Land, were a proclamation of his faith in God’s promise to bring the people back there (Gen. 50:24-26). The ancestral oath to honor Joseph was now kept by Moses.

“The bones of Joseph”: In fulfillment of their solemnly sworn duty and responsibility (Gen. 50:24-26), the Israelites took Joseph’s coffin with them. Some 360 years earlier he had foreseen the day when God would bring about the Exodus, and his instructions about his bones being carried to the Promised Land indicated just how certain he was of Israel’s departure for Canaan (Gen. 50:24-26; Heb. 11:22). After the years of wilderness wanderings, Joseph’s remains reached their final resting place in Shechem (Joshua 24:32).

We remember that, Joseph took Jacob's body and buried it in the cave of Machpelah. Both Jacob and Joseph never stopped believing that their ancestors would receive the Promised Land, as

God had promised. Their faith in this caused Joseph to make them swear to take his bones, so that he too, might receive the Promised Land.

Exodus 13:20 "And they took their journey from Succoth, and encamped in Etham, in the edge of the wilderness."

“Etham, in the edge of the wilderness”: The Hebrew name of this place may be a transliteration of the Egyptian Khetem meaning “fortress.” A line of fortresses (see note on verse 17), stretched from the Mediterranean Sea to the Gulf of Suez. Even if the site remains unknown so that pinpointing it is not possible, it was surely a place bordering on the desert area to the east of Egypt.

These were wilderness areas passed through by the Israelites.

Exodus 13:21 "And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night:"

“A pillar of a cloud ... a pillar of fire”: This was the means by which God led the people. It was a single column, being cloud by day and fire by night (14:24), and was associated with the Angel of God (14:19; 23:20-23), or the Angel of God’s presence (Isa. 63:8-9; see note on 3:2). It was the pillar from which the Lord also spoke to Moses (33:9-11).

This glowing cloud was the Shekinah glory of Yahweh, which later filled the tabernacle (40:35), and then Solomon’s temple (1 Kings 8:10), and finally departed from the temple and the city just before the Babylonian captivity (Ezek. Chapters 8-11). This “glory of the God of Israel” will not return to Israel until the second coming of Christ (Ezek. 43:1-7), at which time the glowing cloud will once again cover God’s earthly people (Isaiah 4:5). It guided the people through the wilderness, assured them of God’s presence and protected them from the Egyptians (14:19-20).

We saw earlier in this chapter that God Himself would lead them. God was their Commander and Chief. Probably because of the heat of the desert and probably because of their rush to get out of Egypt, they moved by day and night. This "cloud" and this "fire" were the presence of God. God is a consuming fire.

Hebrews 12:29: "For our God [is] a consuming fire."

Somehow in this pillar of a cloud and pillar of fire dwelt the presence of Jehovah. They were to look to Him, and no other for where to go and what to do and so are we to look to Him. This presence for the Christians is spoken of in Isaiah.

Isaiah 4:5 "And the LORD will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory [shall be] a defense."

Mount Zion is the church. God is the Protector and Director of the church.

Exodus 13:22 "He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, [from] before the people."

The guiding pillars of "cloud" by day and "fire" by night were the Lord Himself leading Israel, illuminating the people's path. Protecting them, providing reassurance, and directing their movement. Christians today have the Word of God, which provides guidance (Psalm 119:105), and assurance of His presence (Matt. 28:18-20).

God never leaves us. We may leave Him, but He never leaves us. God will lead us and guide us, as long as we follow Him. I believe this is the indication here.

Exodus Chapter 13 Questions

1. Who was Moses told to sanctify?
2. What does sanctified mean?
3. Why were animals included?
4. How did the Lord bring them out?
5. What did God tell them not to forget?
6. What does the not eating unleavened bread mean to the author?
7. What month did they leave Egypt?
8. What does the name of this month mean?
9. What month on our calendar is similar?
10. Whose land had God promised them?
11. What two foods did God promise them?
12. How many days should they eat unleavened bread?
13. What does this number indicate?
14. What did no leaven in the quarters indicate?
15. Jesus is coming back for whom?
16. Why was this repeated?
17. Whose obligation was it to tell the family?

18. Where were they to carry the memorial?
19. What does "Phylacteries" mean?
20. Describe the way the Hebrews understood this.
21. How often were they to celebrate this feast?
22. Why was the ass to be redeemed?
23. If they didn't redeem him, what were they to do with him?
24. What was the price the firstborn son was to be redeemed with?
25. When the sons asked why they did this? What should the father answer?
26. What was the entire reason for sacrificing the firstborn?
27. Jesus redeemed us from what?
28. "And it shall be for a _____ upon thine hand and for _____ between thine _____".
29. Whose land did God lead them away from?
30. Which way did God lead them?
31. In what two things did God show Himself to lead the people?
32. What does "harnessed" mean?
33. What time would this be?
34. Why did God bring them this way?
35. Whose bones went with them to the Promised Land?
36. What do we read about God and the Christians in Isaiah 4:5?
37. What is mount Zion symbolic of?
38. God is the Director and Protector of the _____.
39. What lesson can the Christians learn in verse 22?