

This passage describes the instructions the LORD gave to the children of Israel to prepare them for the final plague upon Egypt – the slaying of all the firstborn in Egypt. However, the Israelites were not automatically protected as they had been from the previous plagues. This time required the application of blood to avoid God’s wrath, a scenario foreshadowing our need for the blood of Christ.

Exodus 11:1-10: At the last meeting between Moses and Pharaoh in the aftermath of the 9th plague (three days of darkness), Pharaoh forbids Moses and Aaron from ever coming to see him again, under penalty of death (Ex. 10:28-29). Moses agrees that this is the last time they will see each other face to face. Before leaving, the LORD gives Moses a last warning to give to Pharaoh. For the final plague the LORD will go out at midnight and slay the firstborn of Egypt, from Pharaoh’s firstborn son to the firstborn of the humblest Egyptian. Even the firstborn of the animals in Egypt will die. However, the firstborn of the children of Israel will be spared to demonstrate the difference that the LORD makes between them and the Egyptians. Moses predicts that the servants of Pharaoh will humbly bring the message that the children of Israel are to leave Egypt after this plague and then angrily leaves the presence of Pharaoh.

1 And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, 2 This month *shall be* unto you the beginning of months: it *shall be* the first month of the year to you.

After Moses had left the presence of Pharaoh, the LORD now begins describing to Moses and Aaron how the children of Israel should prepare for the final plague and their subsequent departure from Egypt. The instructions also include how that they should commemorate their exit from Egypt every year thereafter. The LORD begins by signifying the current month (Abib, later called Nisan after the Babylonian captivity) as “the beginning” and “first” month of the year. The Hebrew words for “beginning” and “first” can refer to being primary or first in importance. Abib became the beginning of their religious calendar, with the passover being the first celebration on the religious calendar. The LORD apparently was not restructuring the Hebrew calendar since their civil calendar remained the same with its first month being six months later. The month Abib corresponds to the end of March and beginning of April, while the civil calendar started in September.

3 Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth *day* of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of *their* fathers, a lamb for an house: 4 And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take *it* according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb.

The instructions that Moses is to give to Israel is that each man that was the head of his household was to choose a lamb for his household to eat on passover night. This choice was to be made on the tenth day of the month and should be an appropriately sized lamb to feed everyone in his household. However, if his family are unable to consume an entire lamb on the night of the passover then he should share the lamb with an appropriately sized neighboring family so that they can eat it together.

5 Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take *it* out from the sheep, or from the goats: 6 And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening.

“Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year” – This lamb represents the Lord Jesus Christ, Who would be crucified at the passover. The lamb had to be without blemish because it represented the sinless nature of Jesus, while it being a male no more than a year old speaks of Christ’s innocence and early death. Verse 46 it says that no bones in the passover lamb should be broken, a verse that John quotes as referring to Jesus (John 19:36).

“ye shall take *it* out from the sheep, or from the goats” – The Hebrew word for “lamb” can refer to a young sheep or a young goat.

“And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month” – The lamb chosen on the 10th day of the month is kept separate from the rest of the livestock until the 14th day of the month, presumably to protect it from predators, injury or becoming blemished among the other livestock which would disqualify it from being the passover lamb.

“and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening” – The Hebrew for “in the evening” literally means “between the two evenings,” that is, between noon (when the sun begins heading toward sunset) and when the sun actually sets at 6:00 pm. According to Josephus, at the time of Jesus the passover lamb was traditionally killed at 3:00 pm (the midpoint between the two evenings), which is the time when Jesus gave up the ghost on the cross (Luke 23:44-46). Here, the instructions are that every family was to kill their respective lamb at roughly the same time of day.

7 And they shall take of the blood, and strike *it* on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it.

The house where the passover meal was to be eaten had to be marked in a specific way with the blood of the passover lamb. The blood applied to the posts and lintel of the door signified that “the destroyer” (death angel) was not to enter that house to slay the firstborn. Anyone inside a house so marked was safe but anyone outside was not (vs. 22-23). This application of blood was also an act of obedience and faith in what the LORD had promised. The foreshadowing of the blood of Christ is obvious since anyone with the Savior’s blood applied to the door posts and lintel of their heart is protected from the death due their to their sin (**Rom. 6:23** “*For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord*”).

8 And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; *and with bitter herbs* they shall eat it. 9 Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast *with fire*; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof.

The LORD gives instructions on how the passover meal is to be eaten. They are not to eat it raw, which is how the pagans often ate during their sacred festivals. Instead, they are to roast the lamb whole in a fire without removing any of the parts normally removed when preparing a lamb to eat (the head, feet, or intestines), which would be consistent with the fact they are were to eat the meal in haste (v. 11). They are also to eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Unleavened bread also implied haste since they would not have time to allow the bread to rise. The bitter herbs spoke of the bitterness of their suffering under the Egyptians.

10 And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire.

Due to the sacredness of the passover meal and what it represented, none of it was allowed to go to waste. Even though it had not yet been revealed, the fact that it represented the sacrifice of Christ for our sins meant that the passover lamb was to be treated with respect and not have its leftovers cast out as garbage. If the family is unable to consume the entire lamb before daybreak, it was to be disposed of by burning in the 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* the LORD's passover.

The passover meal was to be eaten with a sense of urgency while wearing their traveling clothes and shoes and carrying a walking staff. The LORD had promised that Pharaoh would be thrusting the children of Israel out of Egypt the next day, so they needed to be ready to leave (Ex. 11:1, 12:36). The fact that it is the LORD's passover indicated that He is the One in control and has orchestrated their departure.

12 For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I *am* the LORD.

It is the LORD's passover because He will be the One sending the plague against Egypt by slaying the firstborn of both man and beast throughout the land. This plague is a judgment against all the gods of Egypt because these gods can do nothing to protect the Egyptians that serve them from this and the other plagues the LORD has sent on Egypt. He is the LORD, the self-existing One that depends on nothing and no one else, making Him supreme over everything in heaven and earth.

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 the plague shall not be upon you to destroy *you*, when I smite the land of Egypt.

The blood applied to the door posts and lintel of a house was a "token" (a sign or distinguishing mark) to signify the faith that was being exercised in obedience to the LORD's instructions. As the LORD passes through the land of Egypt to slay the firstborn, He would see the blood around the door as a sign to pass over that house and not kill any firstborn within it. The same is true concerning those who have trusted in the blood of Jesus Christ. When the time to judge our sins has come, the LORD will "pass over" those who have had the blood applied to their heart and spare them the consequences of their sin.

Exodus 12:14-51: The LORD emphasizes that the passover will be a week-long memorial that they will celebrate every year (vs. 14-20). Moses then calls for the elders of the children of Israel and explains the passover to them, including how things should be done that night and also in the years to come (vs. 21-28). The children of Israel obey these instructions and at midnight the LORD slew the firstborn of Egypt, from the greatest (the firstborn of Pharaoh) to the least (the firstborn of the prisoner in the dungeon). Pharaoh calls for Moses and tells him to take the children of Israel and leave Egypt unconditionally (vs. 29-32). In fact, the Egyptian populace are anxious for the Israelites to leave before they all died. They were even willing give the Israelites whatever gold, silver, clothes and anything else they needed for their journey to help expedite their departure (vs. 33-36). There were 600,000 men, not counting women and children, when Israel left Egypt (vs. 37-39) and they left 430 years to the day after Jacob and his sons came to Egypt (vs. 40-41). Verses 42-51 repeat the importance of the passover as an annual celebration that is exclusive to the Israelites. No Gentile family could partake unless all the males of the household were circumcised.