

The Passover & Exodus

Excerpts from the Bible (NIV). *Italics denote summaries of the Bible.*

Background & the Call of Moses (Exodus 1 - 4)

Many years after Joseph died, the Israelites¹ had become great in number (1:6-7; 12:37). The king (pharaoh) of Egypt feared their potential so he began to oppress them with forced labor (1:8-14). The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God. God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant² with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob (2:23b-24). To deliver (set free) the Israelites from Egypt, God chose an Israelite named Moses (3:1-10). Moses had been raised by Pharaoh's daughter, but had fled to Midian after killing an Egyptian who was abusing a fellow Israelite (2:1-15). God sent Moses to Egypt to confront Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt (3:10). His brother Aaron went with him (4:10-17).



The Contest with Pharaoh (Exodus 5 – 12)

Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, "This is what the LORD,³ the God of Israel, says: 'Let my people go, so they may hold a festival to me in the wilderness.'" Pharaoh said, "Who is the LORD, that I should obey him and let Israel go? (5:1-2a) Pharaoh was stubborn and would not let the Israelites go, so God sent a series of 10 plagues⁴ upon the land of Egypt (7:14-12:33), though Goshen (the Israelites' territory) was especially protected (8:22-23; 9:4, 6, 26; 10:23; 11:7). These plagues were designed to prove that there is only one true God (7:5, 17; 8:10; 9:14-16).⁵ The first 9 plagues involved 1) water turned to blood; 2) frogs; 3) gnats; 4) flies; 5) livestock sickness; 6) boils; 7) hail; 8) locusts; and 9) total darkness.



The Last Plague Announced (Exodus 11:1 – 11:8)

Now the LORD had said to Moses, "I will bring one more plague on Pharaoh and on Egypt. After that, he will let you go from here, and when he does, he will drive you out completely" (11:1). So Moses said [to Pharaoh], "This is what the LORD says: 'About midnight I will go throughout Egypt. Every firstborn son in Egypt will die, from the firstborn son of Pharaoh, who sits on the throne, to the firstborn son of the female slave, who is at her hand mill, and all the firstborn of the cattle as well (11:4-5).

God's Instructions Concerning the Passover (Exodus 12:1-28)

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt, "This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year" (12:1-2). Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household (12:3)...

¹ 'Israelites' – the descendants of Israel (Jacob), also called 'Hebrews' (Exodus 2:13, 3:18, 5:3).

² In general, a 'covenant' is 'an agreement between two parties that defines a relationship in which obligations or mutual responsibilities may be enacted.' God's promise to Abraham was first stated as a 'covenant' with Abraham (and Isaac and Jacob) in Genesis 15:1-19.

³ 'LORD' (Yahweh) is the personal name of God. 'Yahweh' comes from YHWH or y^hwäh, based on an assumed pronunciation (which is debated). 'Yahweh' is God's self-revealed name to his covenant people. He is 'the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob' who is faithful to fulfill his promises (Exodus 3:13-17).

⁴ 'plague' – widespread disaster, often resulting in famine or sickness (usually 'natural', but not naturalistic here).

⁵ Each of the plagues demonstrated God's power over the 'gods' of Egypt.

The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats (12:5). Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the members of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight (12:6)."

"Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the house where they eat the lambs (12:7). That same night they are to eat the meat roasted over the fire, along with bitter herbs, and bread made without yeast (12:8). Do not eat the meat raw or boiled in water, but roast it over a fire – with the head, legs and internal organs (12:9). Do not leave any of it till morning; if some is left till morning, you must burn it (12:10). This is how you are to eat it: with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste; it is the LORD's Passover" (12:11).



"On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn of both people and animals, and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD (12:12). The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt" (12:13). Then God established the "Passover" as an annual festival for the Israelites to remember God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt (12:14).

The First Passover and the Exodus (*Exodus 12:29 – 15:21*)

At midnight, the LORD struck down all the firstborn of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh, who sat on the throne, to the firstborn of the prisoner, who was in the dungeon, and the firstborn of the livestock as well (12:29). ...During the night Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, "Up! Leave my people, you and the Israelites! Go, worship the LORD as you requested (12:31).

The Egyptians urged the people to hurry and leave the country (12:33a). The Israelites did as Moses instructed and asked the Egyptians for articles of silver and gold and for clothing (12:35). The LORD had made the Egyptians favorably disposed toward the people, and they gave them what they asked for; so they plundered the Egyptians (12:36). *God brought the Israelites out of Egypt and led them toward the Red Sea*⁶ (12:41-42; 13:18).

However, Pharaoh changed his mind and pursued them to bring them back to Egypt (14:5-9). When the Israelites realized that they were coming, they were terrified, and they complained to Moses, "What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? Didn't we say to you in Egypt, 'Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians'? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!" (14:10-12).

But God miraculously parted the sea in front of the Israelites so they could cross on dry ground, and the Israelites went through (14:15-16, 21-22). When the Egyptian army pursued them, the water flowed back and the entire army drowned in the sea (14:23-28). That day the LORD saved Israel from the hands of the Egyptians (14:30a). And when the Israelites saw the mighty hand of the LORD displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD and put their trust in him and in Moses his servant (14:31).⁷




⁶ 'Red Sea' (*NIV, ESV*) – Hebrew *Yam Sup* – the actual location of this 'sea' (and crossing) is disputed, but it was apparently a large body of water. Many scholars conclude it was the Gulf of Suez (the western gulf on the map).

⁷ When the Israelites left Egypt, they numbered about 600,000 men, besides women and children (12:37).


Discussion Questions


1. To be saved from the last plague (death of the firstborn), the Israelites had to sacrifice an animal – “the Passover lamb” (12:21). What were the characteristics of the lamb (12:5) and what must they do after they killed the lamb (12:7) What was the result? (12:13)
2. About 1476 years after “the first Passover,” Jesus Christ died on a cross. Read 1 Corinthians 5:7 (below), John 1:29 and 1 Peter 1:18-19. What do these verses say about Jesus?



 “For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed” (1 Corinthians 5:7, NIV).⁸

3. Through the Passover, God delivered (set free) the Israelites from oppression and slavery in Egypt. How does this illustrate the Christian’s salvation? How does this apply to the person who has “already been saved?”⁹
4. At times, the Israelites were full of doubt and fear (14:10-12; also 5:19-21; 6:9). At other times, they demonstrated trust and confidence (14:29-31; also 4:29-31). What lessons can we learn from the Israelites’ example?¹⁰
5. What progress, if any, do you see in the fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham?

 *In God’s covenant with Abraham (600 years before the exodus), He said, “Know for certain that for four hundred years your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own and that they will be enslaved and mistreated there. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions.” (Gen. 15:13-14, NIV)*

 *When Israel was on his way to Egypt, God told him, “Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you into a great nation there. I will go down to Egypt with you, and I will surely bring you back again.” (Genesis 46:3-4, NIV)*

⁸ It is no mere coincidence that Jesus was crucified at the time of the Passover (Matthew 26:19; John 19:31).

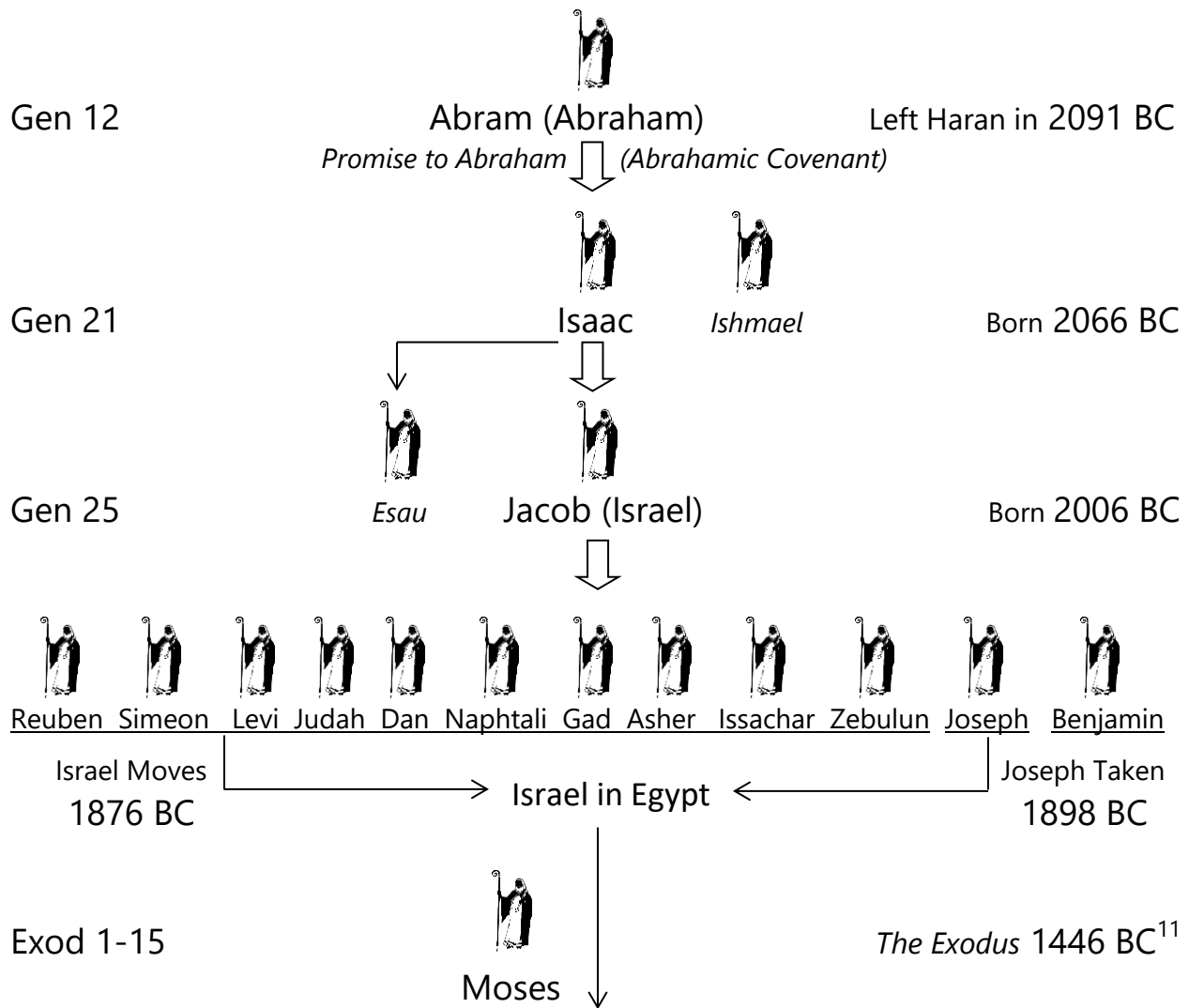
⁹ Jesus said ‘everyone who [continues in sin]’ is a ‘slave to sin’ (John 8:34). Everyone enters life in slavery to sin. We are controlled by our sinful desires, and the result of sin is death, especially ‘spiritual death’ – separation from God, the Source of life. Everyone needs to be saved from both the controlling power and eternal consequences of sin. Jesus is the ‘Truth’ and ‘Passover lamb’ who provides the salvation we need (John 8:31-32; 1 Cor. 5:7). To receive this salvation, we must ‘apply Christ’s blood’ (in a sense) to our own lives through faith in him. And, as believers, whenever we are tempted by sin, we must remember that Jesus has set us free. In Christ, sin is not our master, Jesus is! (Romans 6:6-14)

¹⁰ They were full of trust when they saw God work in mighty power. They were full of doubt and fear when things were not going well. God did not change, but their view of God changed depending on their circumstances. We must remember who God is, what He has done, and that He is faithful to His promises.

Reflection & Application

- Do you have questions about why God instructed his people to sacrifice animals? Do you have questions about why Jesus Christ had to die as a sacrifice? See "A Preliminary Look at Sacrifice in the Bible" (Lesson 5 Supplement) and pursue answers to your questions.
- The Bible says everyone enters life in slavery to sin and death. Thus all people need to be "set free." Have you admitted the need to be "set free?" Jesus, *the* Passover lamb, died in our place to set us free. Do you need to trust in Jesus?
- Brothers and sisters, are you truly living in the freedom of Christ? Reflect on Romans 6-8.

The Seed of Abraham



¹¹ This is the traditional date for the exodus. It is based on 1 Kings 6:1, which says the exodus occurred 480 years prior to the fourth year of Solomon's reign, which is generally accepted to be around 966 BC. Many scholars believe that historical and archeological data support a later date for the exodus, but other scholars believe the data supports the traditional date. Archeological research concerning the exodus has resulted in a variety of interpretations and conclusions, but there are good reasons to accept the traditional dating.

A Preliminary Look at SACRIFICE IN THE BIBLE

Sacrifice in Genesis

- ❑ Abel brought the LORD an animal offering (*Genesis 4:4*).
- ❑ Noah sacrificed "burnt offerings" (*Genesis 8:20*).
- ❑ Abraham sacrificed "burnt offerings" (*Genesis 22:13; also implied in Genesis 12:8; 13:4; 21:33*).
- ❑ Isaac built an altar, and "called upon the name of the LORD" (*Genesis 26:25*).
- ❑ Jacob (Israel) "offered sacrifices" (*Genesis 31:54; 46:1; also implied in Genesis 33:20; 35:7*).



In general, animal sacrifice involved the death of an "acceptable substitute." Why must an acceptable substitute die?

- ➔ Because all people are sinners.
 - 📖 "there is no one who does not sin" (*1 Kings 8:46*)
 - 📖 "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (*Romans 3:23*)
- ➔ God cannot tolerate sin; sin separates us from God.
 - 📖 "LORD...you cannot tolerate wrongdoing" (*Habakkuk 1:12-13, NIV*)
 - 📖 "your iniquities have separated you from your God" (*Isaiah 59:2, NIV*)
- ➔ Death is the necessary result of sin
 - 📖 "The one who sins is the one who will die" (*Ezekiel 18:20, NIV*)
 - 📖 "the wages of sin is death" (*Romans 6:23*)
- ➔ God must punish sin; forgiveness requires the death of an acceptable substitute.
 - 📖 "God...does not leave the guilty unpunished" (*Exodus 34:6-7*)
 - 📖 "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (*Hebrews 9:22*)

In the Old Covenant (Old Testament), particular animals could qualify as acceptable substitutes, but only partially and temporarily, for their purpose was to point toward the Ultimate Substitute.



- 📖 "it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins" (*Hebrews 10:4, NIV*)
- 📖 "The law [including the sacrifices] is only a shadow of the good things that are coming – not the realities themselves" (*Hebrews 10:1, NIV*).

Jesus Christ is the ultimate and final acceptable substitute. Only the Ultimate Sacrifice could really take away sins.

- † "John saw Jesus... and said, 'Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!'" (*John 1:29, NIV*)
- † "For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed" (*1 Corinthians 5:7*)
- † "For you know that it was not with perishable things... that you were redeemed... but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect" (*1 Peter 1:18-19, NIV*)
- † "Jesus Christ...is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for our sins but also for the sins of the whole world." (*1 John 2:1-2, NIV*)

