

Tuesday Morning Bible Study with Ted

Exodus 12:1-2. This month shall be the beginning of months

1. Yahweh spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, 2. "This month shall be to you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year to you.

1. "Yahweh said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt"

At the burning bush, Yahweh commissioned Moses to confront Pharaoh to bring the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt and to lead them to the Promised Land and Aaron to assist Moses

Moses and Aaron are brothers, the sons of Amram and Jochebed. They are Levites. Chapter 7, (yes, I skipped from 3 to 12, so I'll fill in occasionally and depend on Gerald to keep you informed)

Moses is eighty years old and Aaron eighty-three at the time that they speak to Pharaoh.

2. "This month shall be to you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year to you"

Yahweh is about to outline to Moses and Aaron the preparations that they are to make to avoid the death of their firstborn during the tenth plague.

Preparations include a ritual meal prepared and eaten according to exacting rules given by Yahweh. The people will eat that meal clothed and ready to depart Egypt. (*At least, as described by Gerald, all 2 million were dressed and full when they joined in the march out of Egypt.*)

Yahweh instructs Moses and Aaron to revise their calendar to honor this Exodus event.

- transform slave-people into a nation under Yahweh
- honor this event by observing this month as the beginning of their calendar year and anniversary of their birth as a nation
- Israel will call this first month Nisan. It comes in springtime—March or April by our calendar.

Exodus 12:3-11: take a lamb for each household

3. Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying, 'On the tenth day of this month, they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for a household; 4. and if the household is too little for a lamb, then he and his neighbor next to his house shall take one according

to the number of the souls; according to what everyone can eat you shall make your count for the lamb.

5. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old. You shall take it from the sheep, or from the goats: 6. and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month; and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at evening. 7. They shall take some of the blood, and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel, on the houses in which they shall eat it. 8. They shall eat the flesh in that night, roasted with fire, and unleavened bread. They shall eat it with bitter herbs. 9. Don't eat it raw, nor boiled at all with water, but roasted with fire; with its head, its legs and its inner parts. 10. You shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; but that which remains of it until the morning you shall burn with fire.

11. This is how you shall eat it: with your belt on your waist, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste: it is Yahweh's Passover.

3a. “Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying, ‘On the tenth day of this month”

Verse 6 (yep, skipped it to) tells us the Israelites will observe their ritual meal on the fourteenth day of Nisan, but begin their preparations on the tenth day of Nisan.

This is the first occurrence of the word congregation in the Hebrew Scriptures, but it occurs frequently in the first five books of the Hebrew Scriptures). The frequent use in the Torah of this word emphasizes that Israel is more than a collection of individuals. The Israelites are a congregation—a people—the people of God.

3b. “they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for a household”

The ritual feast is to be both a family observance and a community observance.

- Each household:
 - selects a lamb for its meal
 - eats the lamb as a family
- All Jewish families:
 - eat the same ritual meal at the same time
 - the meal becomes a national observance.

4. “If the household is too little for a lamb, then he and his neighbor next to his house shall take one according to the number of the souls; according to what everyone can eat you shall make your count for the lamb”

You and I probably think of households as being only two to four people, but the Hebrew people tended to have many children

- a household would often consist of three generations—grandparents, parents, and children.
- if one family has three members and the other has six, the smaller family would get half the amount of meat provided the larger family.

5. “Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old. You shall take it from the sheep, or from the goats”

Yahweh gives strict guidelines for selecting the animal to be sacrificed.

without blemish -- one year old -- a male either a sheep or a goat

YOUR THOUGHTS???

6a. “You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month”

People are required to choose the sacrificial animal on the tenth of Nisan, and are to keep it ready until the fourteenth of Nisan.

6b. “and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at evening”

This is both a family observance and a national observance. I find it intriguing that the communal nature emphasizes that they slaughter their animal at the same time—at twilight on the fourteenth of Nisan.

7. “They shall take some of the blood, and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel, on the houses in which they shall eat it”

Yahweh instructs the people to sprinkle the animal's blood on the doorposts and lintel of each house. They are to do this prior to the meal—while the blood of the sacrificed animal is still fresh.

8. “They shall eat the flesh in that night, roasted with fire, and unleavened bread. They shall eat it with bitter herbs”

This meal has a hurried character, because the Israelites will be preparing to leave Egypt that night. So the roasting, preparing unrisen bread and eating with bitter herbs makes is a quickly prepared meal.

What's the hurry you might ask????

9a. “Don’t eat it raw, nor boiled at all with water, but roasted with fire”

- Raw meat would be quicker, but would impose health risks
- Boiling meat would require extra time to boil the water.

What other issues might cause this fast preparation and consumption????

9b. “with its head, its legs, and its inner parts”

For those accustomed to purchasing meat in shrink-wrapped packages, the Yuk Factor gets pretty high here.

10. “You shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; but that which remains of it until the morning you shall burn with fire”

This provision has a health purpose, but more importantly, this is a sacred meal.

11. “This is how you shall eat it: with your belt on your waist, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste: it is Yahweh’s Passover”

There is a hurried quality to this meal. The Israelites are to eat this meal dressed for travel

In chapter three I told you that the Israelites would usually remove sandals indoors, but are to eat this meal with sandals on their feet. Shepherds use staffs to herd and to defend sheep, and would check their staffs at the door when coming indoors—but these people are to eat this meal with staffs in hand.

What's up with all this dressing stuff????

Exodus 12:12-13: I will strike all the firstborn

12. For I will go through the land of Egypt in that night, and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and animal. Against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am Yahweh. 13. The blood shall be to you for a token on the houses where you are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and there shall no plague be on you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt.

12a. “For I will go through the land of Egypt in that night, and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and animal”

This alerts the Israelites that something momentous is about to happen. That very night Yahweh will implement the tenth plague on Egypt, killing all the firstborn (both human and animal) throughout the land.

Strike sounds less traumatic than kill, but...

I have not researched Egyptian practices associated with their firstborn, but I know the preeminence of the firstborn reflected in Jewish law and practice:

- Yahweh considers Israel to be his firstborn (Jeremiah 31:9).
- Israelites are to consecrate all firstborn, both human and animals, to Yahweh (Exodus 13:2; 12-13).
- Here is another one of those laws that I find offensive or nonsensical, so I'm providing some insomnia fighting scripture for your future edification:
 - Jewish law requires the sacrifice (the death) of the firstborn, it requires that people redeem their firstborn sons and allows for the redemption of certain animals (Exodus 13:2, 12-13; 22:29-30; 34:20; Leviticus 27:26; Numbers 18:15).
 - Firstborn cattle, sheep, and goats are to be holy—used as sacrificial animals. There is no provision for redeeming them. They must be slaughtered as sacrifices to Yahweh (Numbers 18:17; Deuteronomy 15:19).

- Firstborn sons are to receive a double portion of the inheritance, and fathers are prohibited from reassigning the firstborn's portion to another son (Deuteronomy 21:15-17). It is through the firstborn son that families trace their lineage.

To summarize, people tend to hold their firstborn especially dear. Therefore, Yahweh will strike down the firstborn throughout Egypt as a way of breaking Pharaoh's hard heart and forcing him to let the Israelites go.

12b. “Against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments”

The judgment that Yahweh brings on Egypt during Passover night will extend not only to the firstborn of Egypt and their parents, but also to Egypt's gods.

12c. “I am Yahweh”

YHWH or Yahweh comes from a form of the Hebrew verb “to be” that means “I am who I am.” This is the word that God used to identify himself to Moses. When Moses asked God his name, God replied, YHWH or “I am who I am” (We discussed this in Exodus 3:14).

13. “The blood shall be to you for a token on the houses where you are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and there shall no plague be on you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt”

Note that Yahweh doesn't say, “The blood shall be to *me* for a token on the houses where you are,” but says, “The blood shall be to *you* for a token on the houses where you are.”

Exodus 12:14: this day shall be for you a memorial

14. This day shall be to you for a memorial, and you shall keep it a feast to Yahweh: throughout your generations you shall keep it a feast by an ordinance forever.

14. “This day shall be to you for a memorial, and you shall keep it a feast to Yahweh: throughout your generations you shall keep it a feast by an ordinance forever”

Yahweh sets in place a ritual to help them remember. Did it work????

Bibliography: 1. Bruckner, James K. *New International Biblical Commentary: Exodus* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2008)
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 3. Cole, R. Alan, *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries: Exodus*, Vol. 2 (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1973)