

The Israelites Escape From Egypt

Exodus 11:1–12:36

In last week's study, we looked at the plagues that God inflicted on Egypt to demonstrate his power. This week we take a close look at the last plague.

One of the first things to notice is that the last plague is the only one in which God required that his people respond in a particular way to be safe from the plague. We don't know if the Israelites suffered from other plagues. We do know that the plague that killed many of the Egyptians' animals didn't kill the Israelites' livestock (Exodus 9:1-6). We also know that the land of Goshen, where the Israelites lived, was not hit by the plague of hail or the plague of darkness (Exodus 9:26; 10:23). However, up to this point, the protection God provided for the Israelites didn't require any faith or action on their part. They had seen the devastation of the Egyptians compared to their own safety; they had seen God's power at work. It was time for them to exhibit some faith!

The act of faith required by the Israelites was the sacrifice of an innocent lamb, whose blood was to be displayed on the doorposts. The lamb died in place of the firstborn child. This sacrifice became a symbol that the Israelites understood: An innocent life had to be taken to spare them from death. Although they didn't understand it at the time, that sacrifice looked forward to the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus, the Lamb of God, who shed his blood and died so that all who believe in him might be saved from spiritual death and eternity apart from God.

For 400 years, the people of Israel had lived in a foreign land, and they must have been very familiar with the Egyptians' gods. But through the plagues, God showed the Israelites what he could and would do for them. When the time came for them to step out in an act of faith, they were ready.

It appeared that God had finally gotten through to Pharaoh and the Egyptians. The hurried nighttime departure of the Israelites was not just their attempt to get away before Pharaoh changed his mind again. The Egyptians wanted them to leave because they feared that God would kill all the Egyptians if the Israelites weren't freed (Exodus 12:33).

At God's direction the baking of unleavened bread became a tradition among the Hebrew people. God wanted them to eat unleavened bread each year at the time of the Passover to remind them of what he had done to free them from slavery in Egypt.

On that horrible and wonderful night, "the Lord kept vigil" to free his people from slavery in Egypt. Isn't it wonderful to know that we serve a God who keeps a vigil over us, freeing us from sin through his Son, Jesus, and protecting us from those who would draw us away from him? What a wonderful and mighty God we serve!

Devotion for Leaders

The One Thing: We are all slaves until God sets us free. Because of Jesus, we have new life and can grow closer to him every day.

Weaving Faith Into Your Life: Reread this week's Bible Background on this page. More than another Bible story, this is *our* story. Once we were slaves to sin and living in darkness. Now Jesus' blood protects *us* from death and assures our eternal life. Pray: "Thank you, Jesus, for your sacrifice, for my freedom, and for my life."