

Exodus 7-13 Quotes and Notes

Exodus 7: A continuation of God's Reiterating his Support for Moses

1. Moses is God's prophet – Ex. 7.1-7.

1. "See, I place you in the role of God to Pharaoh" – Ex. 7.1.¹
2. "The Egyptians will know" is the answer to Pharaoh's question in Exodus 5.2 where he says "Who is the Lord?... I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go." – Ex. 7.5.
3. Moses is eighty years old – Ex. 7.7.²

2. Signs before Pharaoh – Ex. 7.8-13.

1. Moses casts his rod before Pharaoh – Ex. 7.10.³
2. The magicians did in like manner with their "enchantments" – Ex. 7.11.⁴
 - a. Sometimes the question is asked, "How were these magicians able to perform these 'miracles'?"⁵

¹ Sarna translation. See: Nahum Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Exodus*, The Jewish Publication Society, 1991, p. 36. Literally: "See I give to you to be Elohim to Pharaoh." רָאָה נְתַתִּיךָ אֱלֹהִים לְפָרְעֹה Robert Alter translates this verse in this manner: "And the Lord said to Moses, "See, I have set you as a god to Pharaoh, and Aaron your brother will be your prophet." Robert Alter, [The Hebrew Bible, volume 1: The Five Books of Moses: Torah, A translation with commentary](#), W.W. Norton & Company, 2015, p. 238. Alter notes that this may have a polemic as its motivating factor: Pharaoh imagines himself a god, but I have made you a god to Pharaoh.

² Note that the Priestly author makes Aaron 3 years older than Moses. Ex. 7.1-13, 19-20a, 22 is from P. The rest of Ex. 7 is from E, the northern record keeper.

³ The staff becomes a serpent (*tannin* תַּנִּין) here in the Priestly (P) text. In the Elohist text (E), it becomes a snake (*nāḥāš* – שָׂרָף). Also, it was Moses' staff that was supposed to be used to perform the miracles in E (Ex. 4.17), but it is Aaron's staff in P. See: Mike Day, [Whose staff is it anyway?, 6.23.2017](#).

⁴ The Hebrew stem *l-w-t* means "to enwrap," so that the noun would mean "things kept under wraps," or closely guarded secrets. The use of "spells" contrasts strongly with the simplicity of Aaron's act, which is unaccompanied by any incantation or praxis. The term itself suggests that the wonder belonged to the magicians' conventional repertoire of tricks. In fact, to this day Egyptian snake charmers practice the deception of turning a rod into a serpent. They are able to induce catatonic rigidity in the native cobra by exerting strong pressure on a nerve just below its head. In this state, the snake assumes a rodlike appearance and can even be handled by onlookers. The jolt it receives when thrown to the ground restores its mobility. Sarna, p. 37. לָהַט *lāhaṭ* means "flaming," or "enchantment," and is related to the idea of enwrapping.

⁵ Joseph Fielding Smith put it this way: "All down through the ages and in almost all countries, **men have exercised great occult and mystical powers, even to the healing of the sick and the performing of miracles.** Soothsayers, magicians, and astrologers were found in the courts of ancient kings. They had certain powers by which they divined and solved the monarch's problems, dreams, etc. One of the most striking examples of this is recorded in Exodus, where Pharaoh called 'the wise men and the sorcerers' who duplicated some of the miracles the Lord had commanded Moses and Aaron to perform. When Aaron threw down his rod, it became a serpent. The Egyptian magicians threw down their rods, and they also became serpents. ... The Savior declared that Satan had the power to bind bodies of men and women and sorely afflict them [see Matthew 7:22-23; Luke 13:16]. **If Satan has power to bind the bodies, he surely must have power to loose them.** It should be remembered that Satan has great knowledge and thereby can exercise authority and to some extent control the elements, when some greater power does not intervene." (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 1:176, 178.) Robert J. Matthews discusses this as well, stating that since Satan is outside of the confines of our mortal environment, he is not subject to the same laws that mortals are. See: Robert J. Matthews, *Selected Writings of Robert J. Matthews*, [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1999], p. 525-527. See also: [Why Miracles are Necessary](#).

3. Pharaoh's heart is "strengthened." – Ex. 7.13.⁶

Exodus 7.14-11.10: The Plagues⁷

1. Water into Blood – Ex. 7.14-25.⁸
 - a. There is some discrepancy as to the ownership of the staff that is being used the in miracles throughout these passages. Is this Moses' staff or Aaron's staff or God's staff? (Compare Exodus 4:2, 7:15, 17:20, 9:23, 10:13 versus Exodus 7:9-12, 7:19 versus Exodus 4:20).⁹
2. Frogs – Ex. 8.1-8.15.
3. Vermin/Lice כִּנָּיִם *kinnim* -Ex. 8.16-20.¹⁰
4. Flies/עֲרֹב *ārōḇ* – Ex. 8.21-32.¹¹
 - a. **False bargaining:** "Let us go three days journey into the wilderness and sacrifice!" – Ex. 8.17. See also: Ex. 3.18.¹²

⁶ וַיִּחַזַק לֵב פַּרְעֹה – "And Pharaoh's heart was strengthened." Remember that in P, Pharaoh's heart is strengthened (*hāzaq*), and in E it is made heavy.

⁷ Pharaoh's intransigence-as foretold-sets off the "extraordinary chastisements" mentioned in verse 4. These take the form often disasters that strike Egypt in the course of a year. They are popularly known as the "Ten Plagues," in Hebrew *'eser maklot*. **The Hebrew Bible features three accounts of the plagues.** The longest and most detailed narrative is the prose version set forth in the ensuing chapters. Psalms 78.43-51 and 105.27-36 present highly condensed poetic paraphrases. The three sources vary in the sequence, number, and content of the plagues. Psalm 78 makes no mention of lice, boils, and darkness, whereas Psalm 105 ignores boils and pestilence. Due to the uncertain meaning of some of the Hebrew terms in those psalms, it is difficult to determine exactly how many and what kind of plagues the two compositions respectively present. Nor can one establish with certainty whether the differences represent variant traditions or poetic license. Sarna, p. 38.

⁸ This is the beginning of several signs that Jehovah will manifest to Pharaoh and his court. Often, students ask how it was possible for the Egyptian magicians to replicate many of these miracles. Robert J. Matthews explained it this way: "Since the devil lives in a nonmortal existence, he is able to perform signs and miracles. However, being limited to his own sphere and being unsaved himself, **he has power to deceive but not to save or redeem.** Thus the Lord warned us, "He that seeketh signs shall see signs, but not unto salvation" (D&C 63:7)." See: Robert J. Matthews, *Selected Writings of Robert J. Matthews*, [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1999], p. 525-527. See also: [Why Miracles are Necessary](#).

⁹ See: Mike Day, [Whose staff is it anyway? June 23, 2017](#). To be brief, in Ex. 4.2, 7.15, 9.23, 10.13, and 17.20 the staff belongs to Moses. In Ex. 7.9-12, 19 it is Aaron's staff. In Ex. 4.20 the staff belongs to Elohim: מִטֵּה הָאֱלֹהִים – "The rod of the Elohim."

¹⁰ In postbiblical Hebrew, the terms *kinam* (a collective noun) and *kinnim* (a plural) mean "lice," though some have suggested that in this text they might mean "gnats" or "mosquitoes." The plagues began with a profoundly ominous, symbolically portentous, and life-threatening transformation of water into blood. The next three plagues are afflictions of maddening or disgusting discomfort rather than actual threats to survival. The tone of the plagues narrative is that of harsh ... satire against the pagan imperial power. Robert Alter, p. 244.

Both Robert Alter and Nahum Sarna note that the plagues can be arranged as three triads, with the third plague in each triad coming without warning. See Sarna, p. 41, and Alter, p. 255.

¹¹ The plague cannot be identified with certainty because the Hebrew word *'ārōḇ* occurs only here in the present context. The word was taken to mean 'mixture,' and the most widely accepted understanding was 'various kinds of animals.' An alternative translation would be "swarms of insects," which the Septuagint and Philo specify as the dog fly. Sarna, p. 42.

¹² Some might call this "a good lie." Shlomo Riskin of the *Jerusalem Post* offers the following thought regarding this complicated piece of scripture: What is happening here? It seems as if the Almighty began by commanding Moses

5. Pestilence – Ex. 9.1-7.¹³

to demand [the right of aliya](#) (the right to immigrate to Israel), and concluded with a request for a three-day UJA mission!

Why the switch, especially since it is obviously disingenuous? This question is raised by various biblical commentators. Abarbanel attempts to mitigate the moral problem of the apparent deception: "Neither [God, nor Moses] stated that the Israelites would return [to Egypt] after their desert journey; therefore Moses did not lie." Perhaps Abarbanel is correct from a technical perspective - the precise words that they would be back after three days are not included in their request - but they certainly did give the impression that they would return!

The holy Ohr Hahaim (Rabbi Haim Ibn Atar) suggests that by saying they would return after three days they made it more likely that the Egyptians would accede to their request for a loan of gold and silver vessels; after all, were they to state that they were off for good, the Egyptians would not "lend" the vessels in the first place. Obviously the Bible believes that the Israelites were entitled to the gold and silver as compensation for the hard labor the Hebrews had performed on behalf of the Egyptians for 210 years. But this only exacerbates our moral problem. **Why not make the legitimate demand up front?** Why resort to the deception of a loan and a three-day mission? The fact is that a strong argument can be made to justify lying to Pharaoh in order to effectuate the exodus. **The majority view in the Talmud - and therefore normative Jewish law - grants unequivocal permission to lie for the sake of a higher good; peace is considered to be a far more important goal than truth.** It is on this basis that the sages explain that God deleted Sarah's comment about Abraham's being old when He reports her reaction to His guarantee that she will bear progeny: God acted in the interest of familial peace (shalom bayit), which is a higher value than complete disclosure of the truth. (BT Bava Metzia 22a).

I would submit that freeing a slave people and saving innocent Hebrews from being slain by sadistic Egyptian taskmasters qualifies as a legitimate enough "peace" to justify the "three-day" ploy. My question on the reason for the three-day suggestion would be a different one. It didn't help soften Pharaoh's opposition; the Almighty knew that Pharaoh would not be moved even by such a reasonable concession, **so why suggest it? I believe that we can best understand the three-day concession once we realize that Moses' major task was not to convince Pharaoh - that was clearly "mission impossible" - but rather to convince the Jewish people.** Indeed, Moses complains to God in the beginning of next week's reading: "Behold, the children of Israel do not listen to me, so how can I expect Pharaoh to listen to me?" (Exodus 6:12)

Moses understands that the first task of a Jewish leader is to rouse his own nation to proper action - and only then will the gentile enemy fall into line. As David Ben-Gurion said: "It's not important what the gentiles think, the only important thing is what the Jews do!" See: Shlomo Riskin, When lying is permitted, *Jerusalem Post*, 27 December 2002: 06B.

¹³ דְּבַר *deber* = pestilence, murrain, plague. The Greek translation of Ex. 9.3 reads as follows:

ἰδοὺ χεὶρ κυρίου ἐπέσται ἐν τοῖς κτήνεσίν σου τοῖς ἐν τοῖς πεδίοις ἐν τε τοῖς ἵπποις καὶ ἐν τοῖς ὑποζυγίοις καὶ ταῖς καμήλοις καὶ βουσὶν καὶ προβάτοις θάνατος μέγας σφόδρα.

My translation: Behold, the hand of the Lord is set against your cattle (κτῆνεσίν) in the field and against the horses (ἵπποις) and those under the yoke (ὑποζυγίοις) and the camels (καμήλοις) and the oxen (βουσὶν) and the sheep (προβάτοις), an exceedingly massive death (θάνατος μέγας σφόδρα).

Sarna speaks of the camels in this part of the narrative:

The presence of this animal here and in the patriarchal narratives is a problem because the camel does not figure in Egyptian texts and art until the Persian period. It is conspicuously absent from the published Mari texts from Mesopotamia, which are replete with information about pastoral nomadic groups and their way of life. Thousands of commercial and administrative texts from the Old Babylonian period (ca. 1950-1530 BCE) maintain complete

6. Boils – Ex. 9.8-12.¹⁴7. Hail¹⁵ – Ex. 9.13-35.

- i. The third and final triad of plagues now begins. The escalation in terror and ruin sets the stage for the climactic catastrophe. This accounts for the extraordinary length of the warning given to Pharaoh at dawn. For the first time the Egyptians and their livestock are given the opportunity to take shelter, and some avail themselves to it. For the first time Pharaoh openly admits to being at fault. Ex. 9.31-32 seem to indicate this plague to be happening in February.¹⁶
- ii. Hail destroys the flax, barley, wheat, rye – Ex. 9.31-32.¹⁷

8. Locusts – Ex. 10.1-20.

- i. God has made Pharaoh's heart "heavy" (הִכְבִּדְתִּי אֶת־לִבּוֹ) – Ex. 10.1
- ii. The cloud of locusts is "very heavy" (כְּבֹד מְאֹד) – Ex. 10.14.

silence on the existence of this animal. All available evidence points to the conclusion that the effective domestication of the camel a widely used beast of burden did not take place before the twelfth century BCE, which is long after the patriarchal and Exodus periods.

The key word in this formulation is "effective," for evidence of another kind does exist. Certain bilingual Sumerian-Akkadian lexical texts from Mesopotamia equate a domesticated animal called "donkey-of-the-sea-land" with a dromedary, thus proving a knowledge of the animal in southern Mesopotamia in Old Babylonian times (ca. 2000-1700 BCE). Moreover, the scribes knew to differentiate between the dromedary and the Bactrian camel, and a Sumerian text from that period mentions the drinking of camel's milk. **A braided cord made from camel hair** (ca. 2000 B.C.E.) **has been found in Egypt**; a tiny bronze figurine of a camel from before 2100 B.C.E. turned up at Byblos; a frieze of a procession of typically Egyptian animals, including a camel, decorates a pot (1500-1400 BCE) uncovered in Greece; a steatite seal from Minoan Crete (1800-1400 BCE) features that animal; and a ration list from the North Syrian town of Alalakh from the 18th century BCE in Old Babylonian includes fodder for the camel. **In light of all this, mention of the camel in Exodus and Genesis can be taken at face value.** First domesticated in southern Arabia in the third millennium BCE, its presence spread very slowly and long remained a rarity. A wealthy man might acquire a few as a prestige symbol. Only much later did it become a beast of burden. Sarna, p. 44.

¹⁴ *šihin* – שִׁיחַן. This word derives from a stem meaning "to be hot." Sarna, p. 45.

¹⁵ A "very heavy hail" - כְּבֹד מְאֹד – *barad kavad moed*.

¹⁶ Sarna, p. 46.

¹⁷ This note serves a double purpose. It creates suspense about Moses' response to Pharaoh's plea in light of verse 30, and it explains why, despite the devastation of crops caused by the hail, there still remained a residue for the locusts in the next plague (10:5). There could be a didactic purpose in these verses, where part of Moses' speech to Pharaoh presents the idea that if he sincerely repents, the wheat and emmer can still be saved.

In Egypt flax was normally sown at the beginning of January and was in bloom three weeks later; barley was sown in August and harvested in February. **Flax was grown primarily for its linen fiber, which was made into yarn, woven into doth, and then bleached. The linen-making industry was of considerable importance in the economy of Egypt** because linen was the preferred fabric for clothing. Barley was cultivated extensively in Egypt; it was used for bread and brewed into beer. The destruction of these crops would be a severe blow to the Egyptian economy.

Exodus 9.32, rye, is a reference to *emmer*, a species of wheat that along with barley and winter wheat made up the three chief cereals of Egypt. The identification of Hebrew כֹּסֶמֶת *kussemet* as spelt, found in many translations, is erroneous for the reason that this cereal did not grow in the land of Egypt. *Kussemet* is mentioned several times in rabbinic texts as one of the principal products of the Land of Israel... Wheat and emmer are planted in August and harvested in late spring or early summer. Hence, they were less vulnerable than the flax and barley. Sarna, p. 47.

- iii. After the locusts come, Pharaoh admits his mistake saying, “I have sinned against the Lord your God, and against you” – Ex. 10.16.
- 9. Darkness/*hōšēk* – Ex. 10.21-29.¹⁸
- 10. The tenth plague: Death of the Firstborn – Ex. 11.10.
- 11. **Putting it all together.** What the plagues tell us regarding the nature of God. We see throughout this narrative a loving God who wants to inflict the least amount of punishment possible to get the greatest results. The plagues start small, and increase in their intensity as Pharaoh’s heart is “hardened.”¹⁹

Exodus 12: The Passover²⁰

- a. This month – [Ex. 12.2](#). Later this will be termed the month of Abib (Ex. 13.4), literally, “when the ears of barley ripen” – אֲבִיב now known as the month of Nisan, March/April on the modern calendar.
- b. “And let every man borrow” – Ex. 12.2²¹

¹⁸ Sarna gives a natural explanation for this plague, stating that “a scorching sirocco wind blows in each spring from Saharan Africa or from Arabia, enveloping the land in thick sand and dust.” Sarna, p. 50. Alter says that this description diminishes the miraculous nature of this plague, whether as from a sandstorm or an eclipse, as this miracle is “emphatically presented as (an) extraordinary intervention by God in the order of nature.” Alter, p. 255.

¹⁹ In the first recording of Laman and Lemuel’s opposition to truth, we read that “with power, being filled with the Spirit,” Lehi was able to cause their “frames (to) shake” (1 Ne. 2.14). This was the beginning of God working to reclaim these rebellious men. Later we see that Laman and Lemuel physically abuse Nephi and Sam (1 Ne. 3.28). With the appearance of an angel, they cease (1 Ne. 3.29-31). Later the brothers tie up Nephi with cords, seeking to abandon him in the wilderness to die of exposure ([1 Ne. 7.16](#)). After being loosed miraculously by God, their anger increases, and it is only the pleading of the daughters of Ishmael that softened their hearts ([1 Ne. 7.19-20](#)). The intensity of these messages increase in Nephi’s narrative, as they are on the sea heading to the Americas. At this point in the story, not even the tears of women would work ([1 Ne. 18.19](#)), nor the words of an aging prophet Lehi (1 Ne. 18.17). Nothing but “the power of God which threatened them with destruction” caused Laman and Lemuel to free Nephi, as the power of the mighty sea forced their hand ([1 Ne. 18.20](#)).

²⁰ This chapter ([Exodus 12](#)) is a very **complex composition**. It divides into a number of clearly differentiated literary units, each centering on various aspects of the Exodus events. Some of these units deal with immediate concerns, such as the last-minute preparations for the departure from Egypt; others relate to the enduring impact of the events in shaping the future course of Israel’s life as a people. Appropriately, the entire complex is framed by the phrase “the whole community of Israel” (vv. 3,47). Another salient feature of this composition is the sevenfold repetition of the Hebrew stem *shamar* - *sh-m-r*, “to observe, guard, preserve.” There is considerable overlap among the various units but no exact duplication. The repetition amplifies the preceding data in various ways, either by the addition of explanatory material or by supplementary details or instructions. **Without doubt, the chapter is a composite of several strands of tradition.** Sarna, p. 53.

Richard Friedman ([Sources](#), p. 138-141) offers this breakdown of Exodus 12: 12.1-20 (P), 12.21-27 (E), 12.28 (P), 12.29-36 (E), 12.37a (The Redactor), 12.37b-39 (E), 12.40-50 (P), 12.51 (The Redactor). To both Sarna and Friedman there exists clear evidence of textual weaving in this chapter, combining traditions of the same story, but from different points of view.

²¹ What is going on with this idea of the Israelites “borrowing” from the Egyptians? לָאֵשׁ - *šā’al*, the verbal root used in this verse, can be read as “ask,” “beg,” or “borrow.” Adam Clarke identifies this ambiguity and writes, “**This is certainly not a very correct translation:** the original word ... *šā’al* signifies simply to *ask, request, demand, require, inquire, &c.*; but it does not signify to *borrow* in the proper sense of that word, though in a very few places it is thus used. In this place the word signifies to *ask or demand*, and not to *borrow*, which is a *mistake*. ... God commanded the Israelites to *ask or demand* a certain recompense for their past services, and he inclined the hearts of the Egyptians to *give* liberally; and this, far from a matter of *oppression, wrong*, or even *charity*, was no

- c. Household size – Ex. 12.4.²²
- d. A lamb without blemish – Ex. 12.5.²³
- e. “Ye shall keep it” – Ex. 12.6. The Hebrew מִשְׁמֶרֶת *mishmeret* is an abstract noun derived from the verbal stem שָׁמַר *sh-m-r*, which has meanings that range from “keep” to “watch” to “observe” (in the ritual sense); all these meanings come into play as the root is repeated through this passage.²⁴
- f. Ye shall “kill it in the evening” – Ex. 12.6²⁵

more than a very *partial recompense* for the long and painful services which we may say *six hundred thousand* Israelites had rendered to Egypt, during a considerable number of years. And there can be no doubt that while their heaviest oppression lasted, they were permitted to accumulate no kind of property, as all their gains went to their oppressors.” See: Adam Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 1:307.

²² Josephus tells us that a minimum of ten participants was required for this ritual in the Second Temple period. The slaughtering of the animal was performed in front of groups no less than thirty. See: [Josephus, Wars 6.9.3](#). Mish. Pes. 5:5, Pes. 64b.

²³ **Elder Holland asked: “Do we see [the sacrament] as our passover, remembrance of our safety and deliverance and redemption?”** “With so very much at stake, this ordinance commemorating our escape from the angel of darkness should be taken more seriously than it sometimes is. It should be a powerful, reverent, reflective moment. It should encourage spiritual feelings and impressions” Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 68.

McConkie speaks of the Passover at the time of Christ: “In the day of Jesus, both public and private sacrifices were made, and the paschal lambs were slain for each family or group, each of such units containing from ten to twenty persons. Jesus and the Twelve made up a group of thirteen, which dropped to an even twelve when evil Judas withdrew. When Nero sat in Caesar's seat a count was made of the number of lambs slain in Jerusalem at one Passover: the total, 256,000. On the basis of a minimum of ten in each group, this meant a Passover population for the holy city of 2,560,000. Josephus placed it that year at 2,700,200 and there were times when the assembled hosts numbered not less than 3,000,000.

Rabbi Gamaliel, the teacher of Paul, said: “Whoever does not explain three things in the Passover has not fulfilled the duty incumbent on him. These three things are: the Passover lamb, the unleavened bread, and the bitter herbs. The Passover lamb means that God passed over the blood-sprinkled place on the houses of our fathers in Egypt; the unleavened bread means that our fathers were delivered out of Egypt (in haste); and the bitter herbs mean that the Egyptians made bitter the lives of our fathers in Egypt.” Bruce R. McConkie, *Mortal Messiah*, chapter 9: Jewish Feasts in Jesus’ Day.

²⁴ Alter, p. 259. I would add to Robert Alter’s analysis of this construction with a sidenote regarding the Greek construction of John 14.15: “If ye love me, keep my commandments”:

Ἐὰν ἀγαπᾶτέ με τὰς ἐντολάς τὰς ἐμὰς τηρήσατε. In this verse, τηρήσατε is the 2nd person plural imperative of the verb τηρέω, a verb that means to watch, to guard, to observe, or preserve. To me, *tēreō* and *shamar* convey the same idea.

²⁵ According to John’s account in the New Testament of the crucifixion, Jesus was crucified in the evening of the Passover, meaning that he died at the **same time as the Jews in Jerusalem were killing the paschal lambs**. The synoptics give a different chronology, they have Jesus *eating* the Passover meal at the same time the Jews were celebrating the Passover (Matt. 26:17, Mark 14:12, Lu. 22:7-15). John’s chronology has the death of Lamb of God ([John 1.29, 36](#)) corresponding to the killing of the lambs in the evening, just before the rest of Jewry sat down to eat their Passover meal.

Gerald Lund explains: Why is John’s chronology different? It is hard to say, but in a way, his chronology makes more sense. Notice that **1**) John said the Last Supper was “before the feast of the passover” ([John 13.1](#)), and **2**) the Sanhedrin would not follow Christ into the hall of judgment where the Romans were because they didn’t want to “be defiled; but that they might eat the Passover” (John 18.28), and **3**) that when Pilate presented Jesus to the Jews “it was the *preparation* of the Passover, and about the sixth hour” when he said “Behold your King!”

- g. “They shall eat the flesh... roast with fire, and unleavened bread... not raw... nor sodden at all with water” – Ex. 12.8-9.²⁶
- h. Let nothing remain – Ex. 12.10.²⁷
- i. God will smite “all the firstborn,” and “all the gods of Egypt” – Ex. 12.12.²⁸
- j. The blood shall be a “token” – Ex. 12.13.²⁹
- k. Israel is commanded to remember the deliverance and to eat unleavened bread, and to “**put away leaven** out of your houses” during this time – Ex. 12.14-15.³⁰

(John 19.14), suggesting not only that the Passover meal had not yet been celebrated but also that Christ was crucified after the sixth hour (noon). This means that Christ would have been on the cross from noon to 6 pm (instead of from 9 am to 3 pm as the Synoptics have it), making his death in the evening at the same time as the paschal lamb is sacrificed. How many lambs might that be? Josephus tells us that “during one Passover of his time, 256,500 lambs were sacrificed.” Gerald Lund, *Jesus Christ, Key to the Plan of Salvation*, 1991, p. 14.

²⁶ Boiling food is not prohibited elsewhere. Alter, p. 260.

²⁷ The sacrifice must be used only for its sacred purpose; hence no leftovers may be saved for eating later. Berlin and Brettler, *The Jewish Study Bible*, p. 126.

²⁸ Berlin and Brettler offer the following: This probably means that the Egyptians' idols would be destroyed in the course of the plague, just as the Philistine idol Dagon is smashed, and other plagues inflicted on the Philistines, in 1 Sam. ch 5 (Ibn Ezra), and just as Assyrian armies sometimes smashed the idols of conquered cities (2 Kings 19.18). *The Jewish Study Bible*, p. 126. Robert Alter comes to a different conclusion, “The idea of some commentators, that the Egyptian idols were smashed in the course of this fateful night, seems fanciful: and the exposure of the inefficacy of the Egyptian gods is in keeping with the preceding plagues. Alter, p. 260.

²⁹ וְהָיָה הַדָּם לְכִם לְאוֹת עַל הַבָּתִּים אֲשֶׁר אַתֶּם שָׁמַיִם – My translation: “And the blood will be to all of you a token (an *'ôṭ* אוֹת, or *sēmeion* σημεῖον- sign, token, mark, something that is distinguished, a portent) upon your houses where you live.” A token, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, is “something given as the symbol and evidence of a right or privilege, upon the presentation of which the right or privilege may be exercised.” See: *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., 20 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), 18:196.

Todd Compton discusses tokens in antiquity, as things which help identify relatives. Compton writes about his paper that “(this) paper began in a seminar examining Greek recognition drama, a type of play in which a child is separated from its (aristocratic) parents at birth (often it is stolen, or saved by strangers after a shipwreck), and so grows up as a slave... but later, when it becomes an adult, it finds or is found by its parents (the recognition scene) through the help of tokens left with the child, often insignia or jewelry on a necklace, sometimes a ring; sometimes a peculiar scar. Often the tokens are kept in boxes and are dramatically extracted from the boxes, one by one, in the recognition scene. Critics, I found, have usually looked at recognition drama with contempt; however, **all Greek drama is bathed in religion**, sometimes very alien, and I wondered if the structure of recognition was not linked with religion in some way...” Todd Compton, [The Handclasp and Embrace as Tokens of Recognition](#), *By Study and also by Faith*, chapter 24, p. 611.

Nibley ([Temples of the Ancient World, chapter 20: On the Sacred and the Symbolic, p. 557](#)) relates: To be more specific, a sign (*signum*) was **both a pointing** (related to *zeigen*, teach, di-dactic, etc.) **and a touching** (touch, take, tactile, dactyl). In particular, it was the *dexter*, the right hand or taking hand, and as such is universal in the *dexiosis* of the mysteries. For the Manichaeans, the right hand was used for bidding farewell to our heavenly parents upon leaving our primeval home and the greeting with which we shall be received when we return to it. (See Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion* (Boston: Beacon, 1963), 222-23.) Tokens were used extensively in regulating ancient social and religious gatherings; they are all means of identification, whose main purpose is security. See Hugh W. Nibley, “Sparsiones,” *Classical Journal* 40 (1945): 515-43; reprinted in *The Ancient State*, in *CWHN*, 10:148-94.

³⁰ Leaven, or **yeast, was seen anciently as a symbol of corruption** because it so easily spoiled and turned stale. Jesus used this imagery when He warned his followers of the “leaven of the Pharisees” (Matthew 16.6), meaning their debased doctrine (see Matthew 16.6–12). In the law of Moses, leaven was not to be offered with the trespass

- l. “Ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance forever” – Ex. 12.14.³¹
- m. “According to your families” – Ex. 12.21. This entire narrative as it is constructed, seems to point to the idea that this is to be a **family affair**, performed among families, and a meal eaten by families during the time of the days of Moses, the Exodus, and into the early period of Israel during the time of Judges and the monarchy. Later, in the 7th century BCE, Josiah and his cohorts will **change the religion of Israel**. This change will introduce a sharp shift in the way the Passover is held. It will become a national pilgrimage to the temple in Jerusalem. The reformers of the 7th century will textualize this change, putting into Moses’ mouth the words of [Deuteronomy 12](#), which make this a national, rather than a localized familial experience.³²
- n. The Lord kills the firstborn: Exodus 12.29-33.
- o. “Neither shall ye break a bone thereof” – Ex. 12.46. See [John 19.36](#).³³
- p. Israel leaves Egypt: Exodus 12.34-51.
- q. Israel “borrows” silver, jewels and gold – Ex. 12.35.
- r. A “mixed multitude” left Egypt – Ex. 12.38.³⁴

offering (see Leviticus 6.17), signifying that the offering must be without any corruption. For the Israelites, **eating the unleavened bread symbolized that they were partaking of the bread which had no impurity, namely, the Bread of Life, who is Jesus Christ** (see John 6.35). The thorough removal of the household of all leaven (Exodus 12.19) was a type or symbol of removing impurities from their presence. Paul used these tropes when he wrote to the Corinthian Saints, urging them to put away sin from their lives (1 Corinthians 5.7–8).

³¹ “The **Feast of the Passover was fulfilled in that form in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ**. The Passover was a law given to Israel which was to continue until Christ, and was to remind the children of Israel of the coming of Christ who would become the sacrificial Lamb. **After he was crucified, the law was changed by the Savior himself**, and from that time forth the law of the sacrament was instituted. **We now observe the law of the sacrament instead of the Passover** because the Passover was consummated in full by the death of Jesus Christ. It was a custom looking forward to the coming of Christ and his crucifixion and the lamb symbolized his death. ...

“The word forever used in the Old Testament does not necessarily mean to the end of time but to the end of a period.” Joseph Fielding Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 5:153–54.

³² For a more detailed analysis of this, see Michael Heiser’s article [Changes in Passover Laws, Dec. 27, 2008](#). Steven DiMattei also lays out the texts in a fairly clear, though at times caustic manner. See: [Is the Passover celebrated at home OR is it a national pilgrimage festival celebrated only at Jerusalem? \(Ex 12:3-8, Ex 12:43-46 vs Deut 16:1-7\)](#). See also: Mike Day, [How did Josiah change the religion of the Jewish nation? Aug. 09, 2018](#).

³³ Speaking of Christ and the thieves crucified with him, John wrote, “the Jews... because it was the preparation (of the Passover meal), that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath day... besought Pilate that their legs might be broken” (John 19.31). Breaking the legs of the crucified causes the victim to hang by the arms and makes it extremely difficult to breathe, resulting in suffocation and death of the victim. “...then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side,” (to kill him if perchance he were still alive) “and forthwith came there out blood and water,” (proving in fact that he was dead). “...For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken” ([John 19.32-36](#))

³⁴ עֲרֵב רַב - *Motley throng*. Umberto Cassuto suggests that the Hebrew *’erev rav* has no component that means “multitude” (King James Version, “mixed multitude”) but rather that the last syllable is not an independent word but a duplication of the ultimate syllable of the main word- thus, *erevrav-* which is a Hebrew formation for pejoratives. (The English “riffraff” comes close.) Alter, p. 265.

- s. A “430 year” sojourn in Egypt – Ex. 12.40.³⁵
- t. Six hundred thousand men (besides women and children) leave Egypt.³⁶
- u. Rules for outsiders taking the Passover – Ex. 12.19, 38, 45-48. It seems from these verses that those who are outsiders must first be circumcised in order to partake of the meal. No command seems to be given to the women in any of these edicts.³⁷

Exodus 13.1-16: Commemorative Rituals

1. The First-Born – [Ex. 13.1-2](#).
2. The Law of *Matsot*³⁸ and *Tefillin* – Ex. 13.3-10.
3. House of Bondage – Ex. 13.3. Literally, *bayit* *'ebedim* בַּיִת עֶבְדִּים "house of slaves." This designation for Egypt, frequent in Deuteronomy, gives voice to the particular experience of Israel in that land. It may derive from the Egyptian practice of settling the labor gangs in workmen's villages in proximity to the site of the project for which they were conscripted. These **villages were wholly enclosed by walls**. One such has been uncovered at Deir el-Medinah, near Thebes. It served the laborers engaged in the construction of royal tombs in the Valley of the Kings. To the Israelite conscripts, such a village may have appeared to be a gigantic "slave house."³⁹
 - A. No leaven was allowed during this time – Ex. 13.7.
 - B. “thine hand” – Ex. 13.9. Tradition has it that this is referring to the left arm.⁴⁰

³⁵ Compare this with [Gen. 15.13](#) that says 400 years and [Ex. 6.18-20](#) that says the Israelites were in Egypt for four generations. This is another bit of evidence to easily demonstrate [the composite nature of the text](#). Sarna cites rabbinical sources that worked to try and make all of these accounts agree with each other, something I find to be too much of a stretch by any use of the terms associated with this idea in these texts. Sarna, p. 62-63. [The Samaritan text](#), one of the oldest manuscripts of the Old Testament, reads, “Now the sojourning of the children of Israel and of their fathers, which they sojourned in the land of Canaan and in the land of Egypt was 430 years” See: [Adam Clarke, Bible Commentary, 1:358](#). I (Mike Day) would simply state that the Bible is insufficient to give us a precise date of either the Exodus, the time period for which the Israelites were in bondage, or even the ruler who was in charge at the time of these events described. There are those that contend that Ramses II was the ruler at the time of these events (Frank, *Discovering the Biblical World*, p. 56), but at this point, I am undecided.

³⁶ There is lots of flexibility here with the numbers. Putting this to a literal count of 2.5 million people, taking אֶלֶף to literally mean 1,000 can make this difficult. The Hebrew word *'elep*, translated as “thousand,” can mean other things. Eleph can mean 1,000 or it can mean a company, or a family, or leader. Kitchen writes, “It is plain that in other passages in the Hebrew Bible there are clear examples where eleph makes no sense if translated “thousand” but good sense if rendered otherwise as “leader” or the like. Kitchen puts Israel’s numbers at around 20K. See: Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, p. 264.

³⁷ Sarna seems to concur with these ideas. See Sarna, p. 64.

³⁸ Matzo, matzah, or matza (Yiddish: מצה *matsoh*, Hebrew: מצָה *matsa*; plural *matzot*; is an unleavened flatbread that is part of Jewish cuisine and forms an integral element of the Passover festival. See: Exodus 12.8, 18; Deuteronomy 16.3. 8. See also: [Matzo, Wikipedia](#). Accessed 2.28.22.

³⁹ Sarna, p. 65.

⁴⁰ Sarna, p. 66.

- C. “between thine eyes” – Ex. 13.9. This is the beginning of *tefillin*, called pylacteries in English.⁴¹

The Exodus

Exodus 13.17-14.31: Into the Wilderness

1. God leads them out of Egypt – [Ex. 13.18](#).
2. God led them **not** by way of the land of the Philistines – Ex. 13.17.⁴²
3. When they see war- Ex. 13.17.⁴³

⁴¹ Ibid. *Tefillin* (תפילין) are a pair of black leather boxes containing Hebrew parchment scrolls. A set includes two—one for the head and one for the arm. Each consists of three main components: the scrolls, the box and the strap. The Torah commands Jewish men to bind tefillin onto their head and upper arm every weekday, in fulfillment of the verse (Deuteronomy 6.8), “You shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be for a reminder between your eyes.” The authors of [Chabad](#) explain the contents of these boxes: The Torah mentions the mitzvah of tefillin four separate times. Each of these texts is inscribed on parchment and placed into the tefillin. These passages discuss the unity of G-d. They describe the miracles G-d performed for us when He took us out of Egypt, and how G-d alone has the power and dominion to do whatever He wants in the physical and spiritual worlds. In other words, these verses cover the fundamentals of our faith.

These texts are:

1–2. Kadesh (Exodus 13:1–10) and *Vehayah ki yeviacha* (Exodus 13:11–16): These describe the duty of the Jewish people to always remember the redemption from Egyptian bondage, and the obligation of every Jew to educate his children about this and about G-d’s commandments.

3. Shema (Deut. 6:4–9): Pronounces the unity of the one G-d, and commands us to love and fear Him.

4. Vehayah (Deut. 11:13–21): Focuses on G-d’s assurance to us of reward that will follow our observance of the Torah’s mitzvahs.

All Jewish males over the age of bar mitzvah (13 years) are to wear tefillin. This is put on anytime during the day, and are typically worn and used during weekday morning prayers. Tefillin are not worn on Shabbat and major Jewish holidays. See: [Chabad.org](#) accessed 2.28.22.

⁴² **The shortest land route** from the Nile Delta to Canaan. It was the southern segment of the thousand mile (1,600 km.) international artery of transportation that led up to Megiddo, into Asia Minor, and then on to Mesopotamia. Beginning at the Egyptian fortress city of Tjaru (Sile), the highway followed the shoreline fairly closely, except where the shifting sand dunes and the land formation dictated otherwise. **The army of Thutmose III took ten days to cover the 150-mile (240 km.) distance to Gaza.** The Egyptian name for this part of the road was the “Ways of Horus”; it was the standard route followed by the pharaohs for incursions into Asia, and the pharaohs were considered to be the living embodiments on earth of the god Horus. Sarna, p. 68.

⁴³ Since the days of Pharaoh Seti I (ca. 1305-1290 BCE), **the coastal road to Canaan had been heavily fortified** by the Egyptians. **A chain of strongholds, way stations, reservoirs, and walls dotted the area as far as Gaza, the provincial capital.** Many of these are pictured in great detail in the reliefs on the exterior of the walls of the temple of Amun at Karnak in the plain of Thebes, and they are also mentioned in Egyptian papyri. Excavations at Deir el-Balai, in the Gaza strip, unearthed an Egyptian garrison fortress, the components of which bear a striking correspondence to those on the Karnak reliefs. It is quite dear that it was the better part of wisdom for the Israelites to have avoided the “way of the land of the Philistines.” They thereby avoided having to contend with the strongly entrenched Egyptian forces on what would have been hopelessly unequal terms. Sarna, p. 69.

4. The Red Sea - *yam suf* יָם סוּף- Ex. 13.18.⁴⁴
4. Moses takes the bones of Joseph with him on the journey – Ex. 13.19.⁴⁵
5. A cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night lead the Israelites – Ex. 13.20-22.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ The literal translation of Hebrew *yam suf*; not the Red Sea, which is more than 120 miles (192 km.) from the probable site of Goshen, too great a distance to cover even in a week in those days. Further, Hebrew *suf* is derived from the Egyptian for the papyrus reed, which grows in fresh water; therefore, *yam suf* would not be an appropriate designation for the present Red Sea because the latter is saline and, as a consequence, does not favor the growth of that plant. Since no lack of water is experienced until after the crossing of the *yam suf*, it may be surmised that this initial stage of the march took the Israelites to the far northeastern corner of Egypt, to one of the lagoons near the shore of the Mediterranean Sea. Sarna, p. 69.

⁴⁵ “And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for an hundred pieces of silver: and it became the inheritance of the children of Joseph” (Joshua 24.32). Robert J. Matthews writes, “It is to be noted in the foregoing passage that **the Israelites did not deposit Joseph's body in the cave with his father** as he had requested, which would have been at Hebron, at least forty-five miles to the southwest from Shechem. The reasons for this failure are not given in the record. **Possibly there were political reasons**, either due to conditions at Hebron, or perhaps the descendants of Joseph wanted his body in their own inheritance near Shechem as a matter of status.” *Selected Writings of Robert J. Matthews: Gospel Scholars Series*, 546-547.

⁴⁶ Do we forget how extraordinary it would be to have a pillar of a cloud over the camp during the day and a pillar of fire at night? That is a daily visible miracle—a daily visible proof that God is with them. When the cloud moved, the camp of the Israelites moved. When it stayed, they camped. It was their Liahona—their guidance through the wilderness. As the Holy Ghost is given to us to help us navigate the wilderness of mortality, God gave the Israelites a visible proof that he went up with the camp (Num. 14.14).

“So long as the cloud rested upon the tabernacle the children of Israel remained encamped; when it ascended, they broke up the encampment to proceed onward. Thus the cloud by day or the pillar of fire by night became the sign for camping and for breaking camp and moving forward until the time their wilderness journey ended. (Exodus 40:34-38.) Such was the symbol of the divine presence. Their path could only be that path in which he led them, and it must be in the patience of faith that they waited upon him. ‘Whether it was by day or by night whether it were two days, or a month, or a year,’ they journeyed or rested at his command (Numbers 9.21-22). Further, **the cloud was a symbol of his presence and their right to appear before him and seek his blessings.**” Joseph Fielding McConkie, *Gospel Symbolism*, 1999, p. 69.