



THE BOOK OF EXODUS

LESSON 8– STUDY QUESTIONS EXODUS 10:21-11:10

DAY ONE

1. As you went through your week, what influence from last week’s gathering of The CORNERSTONE was helpful for you?

Read Exodus 10:21-23

2a. Previously, we have studied passages referring to God “stretching out his hand.” Now the Lord tells Moses to stretch out *his* hand. In verse 21 what effect did God intend for this action to produce?

b. Read Wisdom of Solomon 18:4. What does this verse say about the justice of the plague of darkness described in Exodus, chapter 10?

3. Describe what resulted when Moses stretched out his hand to heaven (verse 22).

4. Darkness and light are frequent themes of the Bible. Read the following verses and record a word or short phrase to describe the person who is in darkness:

- a. Proverbs 4:19
- b. Proverbs 20:20
- c. Ecclesiastes 6:4
- d. 1 John 2:9

5a. According to the beginning of verse 23, what could the Egyptians not see or do?

b. What effect did this plague have on the Israelites in verse 23?

6. CONNECTION: The Egyptians lived for three days in darkness as a result of their hardness of heart. There was a physical darkness, but there are other kinds of darkness, which are just as crippling. There are mental, spiritual, emotional, financial, educational, marital, intellectual, etc. – many kinds of darkness. Describe a kind of darkness you have endured. Was this a darkness you could feel as well as see? How did you find your way to the light – or are you still groping? Record some details here:

Read and record Jesus' words in 2 Corinthians 4:6. Today write a prayer, asking Jesus to take away any darkness in your life.

DAY TWO

Read Exodus 10:24-26

7a. According to verse 24, Pharaoh summoned Moses. What was the first thing Pharaoh told Moses to do?

b. What could Moses take and what was he told to leave behind?

8. What was Moses' response to Pharaoh in verse 25?

9. Summarize Moses' reasons why the livestock must leave with the Israelites (verse 26).

10. Animal sacrifice was a very important part of the Israelites' worship. Read the following scriptural references and record who made the offering and God's response:

Genesis 4:4

Genesis 8:20-21

Leviticus 6:6-7

11. Do you agree with Moses' stubbornness or do you think he should have accepted what Pharaoh offered? Why or why not?

12. CONNECTION: In this passage Pharaoh is willing to compromise with Moses on his request. He offers a halfway measure to try to satisfy Moses and the God of the Israelites by letting the Israelites go without their livestock. Moses stands firm and does not accept the bait. He insists on everything that God wants. Have you ever been in this situation when, tired of negotiating, you are tempted to compromise and accept second best and forget your principles? What did you do and how do you feel about it now?

Read and record Galatians 5:1. Let this thought lead you into prayer.

DAY THREE

Read Exodus 10:27-29

13. In verse 27 we see that Pharaoh was unwilling to let the Israelites' flocks and herds go. What do you think was Pharaoh's reason for this?

14. We skimmed Chapter 8, 9 and the first part of Chapter 10. These chapters contained seven plagues. Look back to these chapters and name the plague referred to in the verse cited below. Then briefly describe Pharaoh's response to that plague.

Plague :

Pharaoh's Response:

a. Exodus 8:1-2

Exodus 8:15

b. Exodus 8:16

Exodus 8:19

c. Exodus 8:21

Exodus 8:32

d. Exodus 9:3

Exodus 9:7

e. Exodus 9:9

Exodus 9:12

f. Exodus 9:18

Exodus 9:35

g. Exodus 10:12

Exodus 10:20

15. What command and warning does Pharaoh give Moses in verse 28?

16a. According to verse 29, what is Moses' response to Pharaoh's threat?

b. In what kind of attitude do you think Moses said this?

17. CONNECTION: In this passage we learn that Pharaoh's heart was hardened – not once, but over and over again throughout Exodus. This is certainly not unique to Pharaoh – we have all hardened our hearts on occasion. A hardened heart is the result of a choice, or a series of choices we have made. We can each choose a soft, pliable, flexible heart, or we can each choose a heart hard as stone. Recall a time in your life when you did one or the other – hardened your heart, or softened your heart to accommodate God's will. Describe the situation here to share with your group.

It's your decision, in every situation – just as it was in the situation you described above – you can choose a hardened heart or a submissive one. Read Ezekiel 36:26 and let that thought lead you into prayer.

DAY FOUR

Read Exodus 11:1-3

18a. We are coming to the end of the confrontation between God and Pharaoh. According to verse 1, what will be inflicted upon Pharaoh and Egypt and what is inferred?

b. The Lord also told Moses what would happen after this final plague. Record this happening, from the last part of verse 1.

19. According to verse 2, the Lord tells Moses to give every man and every woman instructions. What are they to do?

20a. The fight was not between the Egyptians and the Israelites, or even Moses, but between Yahweh and Pharaoh. How did the Egyptians feel toward the Israelites, and, in particular, Moses, according to verse 3?

b. Does this surprise you? If so, why?

21. CONNECTION: In this passage we learn that God not only provided a means of escape to freedom for the Israelites, He also provided a means of support for their trip as well. When God asks us to step out in faith He will provide the means for us to do so. Have you been involved in a ministry where the means of support was not obvious at the time you started but it appeared at the needed time?

Read and record 2:Corinthians 9:13 and let that thought lead you into prayer.

DAY FIVE

Read Exodus 11:4-8

22. In this passage Moses is delivering yet another message to Pharaoh from the Lord. In verse 4, a specific time frame is mentioned. What is it and what will the Lord do?

23a. The terrible plague that will occur next is described in verse 5. What will happen to the firstborn of the Egyptians?

b. God is not making any exceptions, as verse 5 indicates. In your own words, describe the extent of the devastation.

24a. The sadness that results from this plague was far greater than we can imagine. What are the words of verse 6 which convey this grief?

b. Refer back to Exodus 1:22 and 4:22-23. What connection can you make between these verses and the tenth plague?

25a. The Lord planned to protect the Israelites from the consequences of the plague and no harm would come to them. How is this protection depicted in verse 7?

b. According to the end of verse 7, what is this to show?

26a. Moses continues to convey God's message, which began in verse 4. What does He say the Egyptians will do to Him as a result of this terrible plague (verse 8)?

b. After that, what will Moses do?

27. According to the end of verse 8, what emotion does Moses show and why?

28. CONNECTION: In this passage we hear Moses tell Pharaoh that the Lord is going to bring about a tenth plague which will be the worst by far and will cause Pharaoh to drive Moses out of Egypt. Pharaoh has had nine chances to obey the Lord and let God's people go free. Even so the striking down of the first born male seems especially cruel. First born children sometimes have a special place in their parents' hearts. Was this true in your family when you were growing up? If you are a parent, is it true for you? Please support your answer with examples here to share with your group.

Go back and read Exodus 4:22-23 and think about how God's chosen people (you are included) are dear to Him.

DAY SIX

Read Exodus 11:9-10

29. Sometimes, because of something negative ("bad"); we are able to experience something positive ("good"). An example of this is contained in verse 9. What is the "bad" thing and what is the "good" thing?

30. According to verse 10, what did Moses and Aaron do?

31. Verse 10 goes on to say that in spite of the terrible plague, which was visited on Pharaoh and his people, his heart was still hard. What was the plight of the Israelites, as a result of this?

32. CONNECTION: In verse 9 we see an example of something undesirable leading to something wonderful. One seems to almost contradict the other. If Moses and Aaron had not been such faith-filled people, they might have missed the opportunity to trust and thus missed the marvelous unfolding of God's plan. Our lives, like theirs, are filled with opportunities to bring good out of what seems "bad." Think of an example of this in your own life and record it here.

For God, the way to life is always a way of death. Jesus had to die that He might be resurrected and we might live forever. (That's the Paschal Mystery) Read John 12:24 (good memory verse). How does that verse relate to the situation you described above?

Each time we die to self, we take a step into life. Let that thought lead you into prayer.



THE BOOK OF EXODUS

LESSON 8– COMMENTARY
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EXODUS 10:21-11:10

Exodus 10:21-23

Seven more plagues follow: a swarm of frogs [7:27–8:11] invade the land and then die, befouling the land with the stench of decay. This suggests the mocking of the Egyptian goddess Heqt, symbolized by the frog. Frogs were thought to have special life-giving powers, and Heqt was invoked by women in labor. Pharaoh is now punished for commanding the Hebrew midwives Shiphrah and Puah to kill infants during delivery [1:15-21]. Next Egypt is afflicted with gnats [8:12-15], then flies [8:16-28], then a pestilence upon livestock [9:1-7], then boils on humans [9:8-12], then hail and lightning (“fire flashing continually in the midst of it”) [9:13-35] and an invasion of locusts [10:1-20]. Humans, animals and plant life are all diminished or destroyed; “Egypt is ruined” [10:7].

The other great symbol of life for Egypt is the sun, worshipped as the god Re (or Ra) or as Amon. The ninth plague to fall upon Egypt is the humiliation of the sun-god: “darkness over the land of Egypt, a darkness that can be felt.”

The darkness persists for three days. Without the sun, there is no marking of day and night, nor time of day. The calendar, one of the chief responsibilities of the Egyptian priesthood, is overturned. Once again, the gods of Egypt are thwarted by the supreme God, YHWH. All human social life and business comes to a halt: “people could not see one another, and for three days they could not move from where they were.” No doubt this immobility caused panic and further outbreaks of violence and theft. The great civilization of Egypt is moving toward chaos.

The text adds that “all the Israelites had light where they lived”. Jewish tradition holds that the light of the Torah remains with the chosen people, no matter how dark or evil their world becomes.

Exodus 10:24-26

Pharaoh attempts to strike a deal with Moses after the fourth plague (the flies): “Go sacrifice to your God within the land [8:25] or in the wilderness, provided you do not go very far away” [8:28]; and again after the threat of the eighth plague (the locusts): “Your men may go and worship the LORD” [10:11]. Both these compromises would insure that the people of Israel would return to servitude after their religious festival. Now, after the ninth plague, Pharaoh

offers a mitigated freedom: “Go, worship the LORD. Only your flocks and your herds shall remain behind. Even your children may go with you.” Why would Pharaoh give such leave?

Pharaoh knows that the nomadic Israelites would never permanently separate from their flocks and herds, for these animals are their very life. All wealth and prestige were reckoned in terms of animals. Animal sacrifice is the only logical worship for such people, since the animals are God’s gift to the people as well as the concrete expression of their prosperity and their future. There was no better way to acknowledge God than to solemnly return the blood of a slaughtered animal to the YHWH, usually by pouring the blood on an altar or onto the ground in a sacred place, and to share its cooked flesh in a sacred meal. Once again, if the animals stay in Egypt, the people will return.

What Pharaoh, like all worldly-minded people, does not understand is that the Israelites cannot celebrate a covenant festival with YHWH and then resume a life of slavery to Pharaoh. One never returns from worship to the old way of life. Genuine worship changes the worshipper; an encounter with the Divine results in a spiritual transformation. This concept is expressed in traditional Catholic teaching as “sanctifying grace:” the presence of God in us that makes us holy. This grace is the effect of our participation in the Mass or the sacraments, the moments of our own personal encounters with God as members of the Church, the body of Christ.

Exodus 10:27-29

No compromise on the Israelites’ freedom or identity is tolerable. The demand of Moses remains firm: let my people (and all they own) go to worship the LORD. Pharaoh will hear none of it. “Get away from me! Take care that you do not see my face again, for on the day you see my face you shall die.” The divinely commissioned Moses and the stubborn king of Egypt have reached their final impasse. The stage is set for the most dreadful of all the plagues and the moment of liberation for the people.

Moses, who has spoken with God, is not afraid of a man who pretends to have divine power. It is God whose face may not be seen by mortals [Genesis 32:30, Exodus 33:20]. This is the Hebrew way of expressing the utter holiness and transcendence of God. To see God as he truly is would completely overwhelm an ordinary human.

The prophecy of the final plague is about to be spoken. Moses first has one more thing to say to Pharaoh on his own behalf: “Just as you say! I will never see your face again.”

Romans 8:31-39 Exodus 11:1-3

The text introduces the final plague but in a rather complicated way. Once again we see evidence of various traditions being woven together into a single story. In the midst of the final angry encounter between Pharaoh and Moses [10:28-29 and 11:4-8] the text adds a proclamation by Moses to the Israelites: “Tell the people that every man is to ask his neighbor

and every woman is to ask her neighbor for objects of silver and gold.” This will actually take place in 12:35-36, in the midst of the Egyptians’ panic after the final plague.

As often happens in the midst of warfare, blame is not placed upon the people themselves but upon their governments. The entire blame for the ruin of Egypt falls upon Pharaoh and his hardened heart. Again, the entire drama is the work of God: it is YHWH who hardened the heart of Pharaoh, thus provoking the plague, it is the same YHWH who “gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians,” thus opening the way for a quick departure.

The Bible tells us little about the character of Moses, except that he was both humble and esteemed by others: “a man of great importance ... in the sight of Pharaoh’s officials and in the sight of the people.” His role as the great leader and teacher does not “go to his head.” All Moses’ glory is from the LORD.

Exodus 11:4-8

Now back to the argument between Moses and Pharaoh. Moses announces the judgment of God upon the stubborn king: the death of Pharaoh’s heir, and the most grievous punishment upon the land of Egypt.

The plague will occur about midnight, the darkest hour and the time of death’s reign. It is the LORD himself who will go out through Egypt, for such a plague can have no natural explanation.

The term firstborn here and in the Book of Exodus does not refer to the oldest child of the family. It means specifically a firstborn child who is also male. This very selective, mysterious plague cannot be blamed on a childhood disease, for example. It will kill a firstborn son but not a (firstborn) daughter.

The symbolism of this horrible plague is derived from ancient laws of inheritance. A firstborn son enjoyed special prominence in the family and clan. [Genesis 43:33] To him belonged a double share of the inheritance [Deuteronomy 21:15-17]. He was responsible for the family property and was the final arbiter in family disputes.

Since the Israelites are, collectively, God’s firstborn son [4:22-23], the tenth plague targets “every firstborn in the land of Egypt... from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne to the firstborn of the female slave who is behind the handmill, and all the firstborn of the livestock.” The death of the crown prince of Egypt undermines the security of the nation; the death of all firstborn sons in the land guarantees social chaos. “Then there will be a loud cry throughout the whole land of Egypt.”

In contrast to the loud cry of grief among the Egyptians, there will be a peaceful stillness among the chosen people [see Wisdom 18:19]: “not a dog shall growl.” The mysterious force that slays

the Egyptian firstborn sons is not of this world. It is not accomplished by humans or animals, but by the hand of the LORD. This same force will protect the Israelites completely, so that the disturbance in Egypt will not even wake a sleeping dog.

This example is one of many that will show how the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel. Making something separate, distinct, or different is part of the Hebrew concept of holiness. YHWH is distinct from the gods of Egypt, Israel is different from Egypt. Later, the Israelites will be trained in a code of holy living that includes not mingling or intermarrying with other nations, not accepting the religious practices of other nations, not eating food that is “unfit”, and separating or distinguishing the Sabbath (Saturday) from the other days of the week.

Moses, as prophet, announces that the power of God will be so great as to turn the hearts of “all these officials of (Pharaoh). They shall come down to me, and bow low to me, that is, to YHWH, saying, ‘Leave us, you and all the people who follow you.’” Finally, Moses, the man, displays his hot anger and departs from Pharaoh. The Hebrew text says that he left “with nostrils flaring.” Moses has overcome the king of Egypt.

Exodus 11:9-10

The last verses of this chapter summarize the conflict and explain how the stubbornness of Pharaoh is part of the divine plan. Pharaoh’s resistance simply gives YHWH more opportunities to glorify himself by performing many more wonders ...in the land of Egypt.

The first nine plagues, even in their increasing intensity, only make Pharaoh more determined not to lose his slaves. Only the tenth plague will convince him, if only long enough for the people of Israel to begin their journey to freedom. First, however, we explore the sacred ritual to be observed by the Israelites, not only for the night of the final plague, but for all time to come, so that the redemption of Israel by the LORD may be shared by all subsequent generations. Our next lesson opens up for us the meaning of the Passover celebration.