

## UNIT 21: THE PASSOVER (Exodus 12:1-28)

### INTRODUCTION

#### Text and Textual Notes<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The 12<sup>th</sup> chapter of Exodus forms a turning point in the development of the book: it is the culmination of the ten plagues on Egypt and the beginning of the actual deliverance from bondage. Moreover, the celebration of this festival of passover was to become a central part of the holy calendar of Israel. The contents of this chapter will obviously have significance for New Testament studies as well since the passover was a type of the death of Jesus.

The structure of this whole section before the crossing of the sea is as follows: the institution of the passover (12:1-28), the night of farewell and departure (12:29-42), slaves and strangers (12:43-51), and the laws of the firstborn (13:1-16). In this immediate section there is the institution of the Passover itself (12:1-13), then the Unleavened Bread (12:14-20), and then the report of the response of the people (12:21-28).

**12:1** Yahweh said<sup>2</sup> to Moses and to Aaron in the land of Egypt,<sup>3</sup> **12:2** “This month is to be<sup>4</sup> the beginning of months for you; it is to be<sup>5</sup> for you the first of the months of the year.<sup>6</sup> **12:3** Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying, ‘In the tenth day of this month they each<sup>7</sup> shall take a lamb<sup>8</sup> for themselves according to the house of their fathers--a lamb for a house.<sup>9</sup> **12:4** And if any household<sup>10</sup> is too small<sup>11</sup> for the lamb,<sup>12</sup> the man<sup>13</sup> and his neighbor who is near to his house are to take<sup>14</sup> a lamb according to the number of people--you shall

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<sup>2</sup> Literally, “and Yahweh said”

<sup>3</sup> The text has *le'mor*, “saying”

<sup>4</sup> “is to be” supplied

<sup>5</sup> “is to be” supplied

<sup>6</sup> B. Jacob shows that the intent of the passage was not to make this month in the springtime the New Year--that was in the autumn. Rather, when counting the months of the years this was supposed to be remembered first, for it was the great festival of freedom from Egypt. He observes how critical scholars have unnecessarily tried to date one New Year earlier than the other (pp. 294,295).

<sup>7</sup> The text says, “and they shall take for themselves a man a lamb.” This is clearly the distributive sense of “man.”

<sup>8</sup> The *seh* is a single head of the flock, or smaller cattle, which would include both sheep and goats.

<sup>9</sup> The expression “fathers’ house” is a common expression for a family. Here, the passover is to be a domestic institution. Each lamb was to be shared by family members.

<sup>10</sup> Literally, “the house”

<sup>11</sup> Later Judaism ruled that “too little” meant fewer than ten, in accordance with the interpretation based on Numbers 14:27 that ten was the smallest number that would constitute a congregation (Driver, p. 88).

<sup>12</sup> The clause uses the comparative *min* construction: *yim'at habbayit mihyot misseh*, literally, “the house is small from being for a lamb,” or, “too small for a lamb.” It clearly means that if there are not enough people in the household to have a lamb by themselves, they should join with another family. For the use of the comparative, see GKC, par. 133c.

<sup>13</sup> Text: “he and his neighbor”

make your count for the lamb according to how much each one can eat.<sup>15</sup> **12:5**  
 You must take<sup>16</sup> a perfect<sup>17</sup> animal, a male that is one year old;<sup>18</sup> you may take<sup>19</sup> it  
 from the sheep or from the goats. **12:6** And you must take care of it<sup>20</sup> until  
 the fourteenth day of the same month,<sup>21</sup> and then all the congregation of the  
 assembly<sup>22</sup> will kill them<sup>23</sup> between the evenings.<sup>24</sup> **12:7** Then they shall take

<sup>14</sup> The construction uses a perfect tense with a *waw* consecutive after a conditional clause: “if the household is too small . . . then he and his neighbor shall take . . . .”

<sup>15</sup> Literally: “[every] man according to his eating”

The reference is normally taken to mean whatever each person could eat. B. Jacob suggests, however, that the reference may not be to each individual person’s appetite, but to each family. Each man who is the head of a household was to determine how much his family could eat, and this in turn would determine how many families shared the lamb (see Jacob, p. 299).

<sup>16</sup> The construction has: “[The] animal . . . will be to you.” This may be interpreted as a possessive use of the *lamed*, meaning, “[the] animal . . . you have” (your animal) for the passover. In the context instructing the people to take an animal for this festival, the idea here is the one they take or choose, their animal, must meet these qualifications. Jacob simply renders it, “A perfect male lamb one year old shall it be”; but this leaves out “to you.” Cassuto has, “your lamb shall be without blemish . . . .”

<sup>17</sup> The word *tamim* means “perfect” or “whole” or “complete” in the sense of not having blemishes and diseases--no physical defects. The rules for sacrificial animals applied here (see Lev. 22:19, 21; Deut. 17:1).

<sup>18</sup> The idiom says “a son of a year” (ben *shanah*), meaning, a “yearling” or “one year old” (see GKC, par. 128v).

<sup>19</sup> Because a choice is being given here in this last clause, the imperfect tense nuance of permission should be used. They must have a perfect animal, but it may be a sheep or a goat. The verb’s object “it” is supplied from the sense of the passage.

<sup>20</sup> The text has *w<sup>e</sup>hayah lakem mishmeret*, literally, “and it shall be for you for a keeping.” This noun stresses the activity of watching over or caring for something, probably to keep it in its proper condition for its designated use (see 16:23, 32-34).

<sup>21</sup> Literally, “this month”

<sup>22</sup> The expression “all the congregation of the assembly” is a pleonasm. The verse means that the whole congregation will kill the lamb, i.e., each family unit within the congregation will kill its animal.

some of the blood and put it on the two side posts and on the lintel, upon the houses wherein they shall eat it. **12:8** And they shall eat the meat in the same night,<sup>25</sup> roasted with fire, with unleavened cakes,<sup>26</sup> and with bitter herbs shall they eat it. **12:9** Do not eat it raw,<sup>27</sup> or cooked in water, but roast it over the fire, its head, its legs, and its inner parts. **12:10** And you shall leave nothing until morning, but that which remains of it until morning you must burn<sup>28</sup> with fire. **12:11** And this is how you are to eat it--dressed to travel,<sup>29</sup> your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. And you are to eat it in haste.<sup>30</sup> It is the

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<sup>23</sup> Literally, “it”

<sup>24</sup> The expression “between the evenings” has had a good deal of discussion. There are several predominant views. (1) Onkelos says between the two suns, which the Talmud explains as the time between the sunset and the time the stars become visible. More technically, the first “evening” would be the time between sunset and the appearance of the crescent moon, and the second “evening” the next hour, or from the appearance of the crescent moon to full darkness (see Deut. 16:6--“at the going down of the sun”). (2) Saadia, Rashi, and Kimchi say the first evening is when the sun begins to decline in the west and cast its shadows, and the second evening is the beginning of night. (3) The traditional view, adopted by the Pharisees and the Talmudists (*Pesahim* 61<sup>a</sup>), was that the first evening was when the heat of the sun began to decrease, and the second evening began at sunset, or, roughly, from 3-5 p.m. The Mishnah (*Pes.* 5:1) indicates it was killed about 2:30 p.m.--anything before noon was not valid. Driver concludes from this survey that the first view is probably the best, although the last view was the traditionally accepted view (pp. 89-90).

<sup>25</sup> Literally, “this night”

<sup>26</sup> The word is plural, and so it must refer to the round pan cakes of the unleavened bread. These are the kinds of breads that could be baked quickly, not allowing time for the use of leaven. In Deut. 16:3 the unleavened cakes are called “the bread of affliction,” which meant the alarm and the haste of the Israelites. In later Judaism and in the writings of Paul, leaven came to be a type of evil or corruption, and so “unleavened bread” was interpreted to be a picture of purity or freedom from corruption or defilement (Driver, pp. 90, 91).

<sup>27</sup> This ruling was to prevent their eating it just softened by the fire or partially roasted as differing customs might prescribe or allow.

<sup>28</sup> In this section of divine instructions (using imperfect of instruction) this clause inserts an obligatory imperfect--they must burn anything left over with fire.

<sup>29</sup> Literally, “your loins girded”

<sup>30</sup> Driver argues that “haste” is not fully accurate. He suggests “trepidation,” that mixture of hurry and alarm. In Deuteronomy 20:3 it is connected to “tremble.”

passover<sup>31</sup>  
of Yahweh.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> The meaning of *pesakh* is debated. (1) Some have tried to connect it to the Hebrew verb of the same radicals that means “to halt, leap, limp, stumble.” See 1 Kings 18:21 where the word describes the priests of Baal cavorting around the altar; also the crippled child in 2 Sam 4:4. (2) Others connect it to the Akkadian *passahu*, which means “to appease, make soft, placate”; or (3) an Egyptian word to commemorate the harvest (see Segal, *The Passover*, pp. 95-100). The verb occurs in Isaiah 31:5 with the connotation of “to protect”; Childs suggests that this was already influenced by the Exodus tradition (*Exodus*, p. 183, N. 11). Whatever links there may or may not have been in the word that show an etymology, in this passage it is describing Yahweh’s passing over or through.

<sup>32</sup> The entire section of these instructions for the Passover is useful to the Christian expositor, for Paul simply announced that Christ our Passover has been sacrificed for us, and therefore we must keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread--a life of holiness.. Christian expositors down through the years have been able to see the clear connections between Exodus 12 and the Gospel--deliverance from bondage by the blood of the lamb, the lamb without blemish, salvation from judgment by the angel of death, and the details of the time of the sacrifice of Christ as the Passover Lamb on Good Friday at 3 p.m. Here, the large picture as well as the details fit the typology of the death of Christ. And, the fact that the last Supper was a passover meal in which Jesus explained the full meaning of it all adds to the completion.,

A related area of correspondence between the testaments is the image of “son.” Christ is the “only begotten Son” but also the Passover Lamb. So in the fulfillment of the Lamb that brings redemption we also have the Son, the Seed of Abraham. When Old Testament images overlap like this, the expositor is confronted with the richness of the eternal plan of God revealed in Scripture. In Exodus the firstborn die as part of the judgment of God on the world; in the New Testament the “son” dies in our place, so that we might live. For additional material on these themes, see P. R. Davies, “The Sacrifice of Isaac and Passover,” *Studia Biblica* (1979):127-132; and “Passover and the Dating of the *Aqedah*,” *JJS* 30 (1979):59-67.

**12:12** And I will pass through<sup>33</sup> the land of Egypt in the same<sup>34</sup> night, and I will kill<sup>35</sup> all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both of humans and of animals,<sup>36</sup> and upon all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment.<sup>37</sup> I am Yahweh. **12:13** The blood will be<sup>38</sup> a sign for you on your houses where you are: when I see<sup>39</sup> the blood I will pass over you,<sup>40</sup> and the plague<sup>41</sup> will not be on you for a destroyer<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> The verb *w<sup>e</sup>‘abarti* is the *qal* perfect with the *waw* consecutive, announcing the future action of God in bringing judgment on the land. The word means “pass over, across, through.” This verb provides a contextual motive for the name “Passover.”

<sup>34</sup> Literally, “this night”

<sup>35</sup> The verb *nakah* means “to strike, smite, attack”; it does not always mean “to kill,” but that is obviously the meaning in this context. It was also the meaning of the usage where Moses slew the Egyptian and buried him in the sand (ch. 2).

<sup>36</sup> Literally, “man and beast”

<sup>37</sup> *’e‘eseh sh<sup>e</sup>phatim* is “I will do judgments.” The statement clearly includes what had begun in Exodus 6:1. But the statement that God would judge the gods of Egypt is appropriately introduced here (see also Num. 33:4) because with the judgment on Pharaoh and the deliverance from bondage, Yahweh would truly show Himself to be the one true God. Thus, “I am Yahweh” is fitting here (see Jacob, p. 312).

<sup>38</sup> Literally, “and the blood will be”

<sup>39</sup> Both verbs are perfect tenses with *waw* consecutives: *w<sup>e</sup>ra’iti . . . u-phasakhti*); the first of these parallel verb forms is subordinated to the second as a temporal clause. See Gesenius’ description as perfect consecutives in the protasis and apodosis (GKC, par. 159g).

<sup>40</sup> The meaning of the verb is supplied in part from the obvious meaning of the context as well as the previous verb “pass through, by, over.” Isaiah 31:5 says, “As birds flying, so will Yahweh protect Jerusalem: he will protect and deliver, he will pass over and rescue.” The word does not occur enough times to enable one to develop a clear meaning. It is probably not the same word as “to limp” found in 1 Kings 18:21, 26, unless there is a highly developed category of meaning there.

<sup>41</sup> The word “plague” (*negeph*) is literally a blow, or a striking. It usually describes a calamity or affliction given to those who have aroused God’s anger, such as, 30:12; Num. 8:19; 16:46,7; Josh. 22:17 (Driver, pp. 92,93).

<sup>42</sup> The Hebrew form *mashkhit* is the *hiphil* participle of *shakhat*. It can be paraphrased “to destroy [you]” but would be more properly rendered “(for) a destroyer” or “for destruction.” The word itself is a harsh term; it was used to describe Yahweh’s destruction of Sodom and

when I strike<sup>43</sup> the land of Egypt.<sup>44</sup>

**12:14** This day will become<sup>45</sup> a memorial<sup>46</sup> for you, and you shall celebrate it as a festival<sup>47</sup> to Yahweh to Yahweh--you shall celebrate the feast perpetually as a lasting ordinance.<sup>48</sup> **12:15** For seven days<sup>49</sup> you must eat<sup>50</sup> bread made

Gomorrah (Gen. 13:10).

<sup>43</sup> *b<sup>e</sup>hakkoti* is the *hiphil* infinitive construct from *nakah*, with a preposition prefixed and a pronominal suffix added to serve as the subjective genitive--the subject of this temporal clause.

<sup>44</sup> For additional discussions, see William H. Elder, "The Passover," *RevExp* 74 (1977):511-522; Earl Nutz, "The Passover," *BibViewpoint* 12 (1978):23-28; Harold M. Kamsler, "The Blood Covenant in the Bible," *Dor le Dor* 6 (1977):94-98; Angel Rodriguez, *Substitution in the Hebrew Cultus and in Cultic-Related Texts* (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1979); Bernard Ramm, "The Theology of the Book of Exodus: a Reflection on Exodus 12:12," *SWTJ* 20 (1977):59-68; and Mordechai Gilula, "The Smiting of the First-Born: An Egyptian Myth?" *Tel Aviv* 4 (1977):94-85.

<sup>45</sup> Literally, "and this day will be"

<sup>46</sup> The expression "will be for a memorial" means "will become a memorial."

The instruction for the Unleavened Bread (vv. 14-20) begins with the introduction of the "memorial" (*zikkaron*, from *zakar*). The reference is to the fifteenth day of the month, the beginning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Jacob notes that it refers to the death blow on Egypt, but as a remembrance had to be held on the next day, not during the night. He also notes that this was the origin of "the Day of the LORD" ("the Day of Yahweh") which the prophets predicted as the day of the divine battle. On it the enemy would be wiped out (Jacob. P. 315). For further information, see Brevard Childs, *Memory and Tradition*. The point of the word "remember" in Hebrew is not simply a recollection of an event, but a reliving of it, a reactivating of its significance. In covenant rituals "remembrance" or "memorial" is designed to prompt God and worshiper alike to act in accordance with the covenant. Jesus brought the motif forward to the New Covenant with "this do in remembrance of me."

<sup>47</sup> The verb *w<sup>e</sup>khaggotem*, a perfect tense with the *waw* consecutive to continue the instruction, is followed by the cognate accusative (*khag*), for emphasis. As the wording implies and the later legislation required, this would involve a pilgrimage to the sanctuary of the Yahweh..

<sup>48</sup> The two expressions show that this celebration was to be kept perpetually: the line has "according to your generations, [as] a statute forever." "Generations" means successive generations (Driver, p. 94). *'olam* means "ever, forever, perpetual"--no end in sight.

without yeast.<sup>51</sup> Surely,<sup>52</sup> on the first day you must put away the yeast from your houses, because anyone who eats leavened bread<sup>53</sup> from the first day to the seventh day may be cut off<sup>54</sup> from Israel.

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<sup>49</sup> This expression is an adverbial accusative of time. The feast was to last from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> of the month.

<sup>50</sup> The imperfect tense could be translated as a future, expressing the instruction for Israel. This verse seems, rather, to stress their obligation--they must not eat leaven.

<sup>51</sup> The etymology of *matssot*, “unleavened bread,” is uncertain. Suggested connections to known verbs include “to squeeze, press,” “to depart, go out,” “to ransom,” or to an Egyptian word “food, cake, evening meal.” For a more detailed study of “unleavened bread” and related matters such as “yeast” or “leaven,” see Allen P. Ross, “Bread, Cake,” in *The New International Dictionary of Theology and Exegesis*, ed. by Willem Van Gemeren (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1997), Vol. 4, pp. 448-453.

<sup>52</sup> The particle serves to emphasize, not restrict here (Childs, p. 183, N. 15).

<sup>53</sup> Literally, “every eater of leavened bread,” this participle stands at the beginning of the clause as a *casus pendens*, to indicate a condition, the contingent occurrences of which involve a further consequence (GKC, par. 116w).

<sup>54</sup> The verb *w<sup>e</sup>nikr<sup>e</sup>ta* ) is the *niphal* perfect with the *waw* consecutive; it is a common formula in the Law for divine punishment. Here, in sequence to the idea that someone might eat leavened bread, the result would be that “that soul [the verb is feminine] will be cut off.” The verb is the equivalent of the imperfect tense due to the consecutive; a translation with a nuance of the imperfect of possibility fits better than a specific future. There is the real danger of being cut off, for while the punishment might include excommunication from the community, the real danger was in the possibility of divine intervention to root out the evil-doer (Driver, p. 94). Gesenius lists this as the use of a perfect with a *waw* consecutive after a participle (a *casus pendens*) to introduce the apodosis (GKC, par. 112mm).

Concerning the use of leaven, Jacob writes, “This prohibition against leaven, with its slight intoxicating effect, and the command to eat bitter herbs, displayed an extraordinary sensitivity to any stimulation (compare with 20:25f.). The ancient Israelite experience considered all luxury and opulence as vulgar and barbaric; enjoyment led to vulgarity, while restraint to nobility and priestly holiness” (p. 319).

**12:16** And on the first day there shall be a holy convocation,<sup>55</sup> and on the seventh day there shall be a holy convocation for you: no work of any kind shall be done<sup>56</sup> on them, only that which every person must eat--it alone may be prepared for you. **12:17** And you shall keep the Feast of Unleavened bread, because on this same<sup>57</sup> day I brought your hosts<sup>58</sup> out from the land of Egypt, and so you must keep this day perpetually as a lasting ordinance.<sup>59</sup> **12:18** In the first month,<sup>60</sup> on the fourteenth day of the month, in the evening, you shall eat unleavened bread until the twenty-first day of the month in the evening. **12:19** For seven days<sup>61</sup> leaven must not be found in your houses, for whoever eats that which is leavened--that person<sup>62</sup> shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether a foreigner<sup>63</sup> or one born<sup>64</sup> in the land. **12:20** You shall not eat anything

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<sup>55</sup> This refers to an assembly of the people at the sanctuary for religious purposes. The word “convocation” implies that the people were called together; and Numbers 10:2 indicates they were called together by trumpets.

<sup>56</sup> The text says “all/every work shall not be done.” The word refers primarily to the work of one’s occupation. Jacob explains that since this comes prior to the fuller description of laws for sabbaths and festivals, the passage simply restricts all work except for the preparation of food. Once the laws are added, this qualification is no longer needed (p. 322). Gesenius translates this as “no manner of work shall be done” (GKC, par. 152b).

<sup>57</sup> The word means “bone”; the expression then means “the substance of the day,” the day itself, the very day (Driver, p. 95).

<sup>58</sup> The word is “armies” or “divisions.” The narrative will continue to portray Israel as a mighty army, marching forth in its divisions.

<sup>59</sup> See 12:14

<sup>60</sup> “month” supplied

<sup>61</sup> “Seven days” is an adverbial accusative of time (see Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, par. 56).

<sup>62</sup> The term is *nepesh*, often translated “soul.” The term refers to the whole person, the soul within the body. The noun is feminine, agreeing with the feminine verb “be cut off.”

<sup>63</sup> Or, “alien,” or “stranger”

<sup>64</sup> The term refers to the one who is native born in the land. Jacob argues that since the “stranger” also was born in the land, the distinction has to be greater. The natural citizen is the one who has ancestors who came out of Egypt by the exodus (p. 324).f

leavened; in all your dwellings you must eat unleavened bread.”

**12:21** Then Moses summoned the elders of Israel, and said to them, “Draw out<sup>65</sup> and take small animals<sup>66</sup> for yourselves according to your families; and kill the passover. **12:22** And you shall take a bunch of hyssop,<sup>67</sup> and dip it in the blood that is in the basin,<sup>68</sup> and strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood that is in the basin. And none of you shall go out<sup>69</sup> the door of his house until morning. **12:23** For Yahweh will pass through to strike Egypt; and when He sees<sup>70</sup> the blood on the lintel and the two side posts, then Yahweh will pass over the door, and He will not permit the destroyer<sup>71</sup> to enter into your houses to strike you.<sup>72</sup> **12:24** And you shall observe this event for an ordinance for you and for your children for ever. **12:25** And it shall be when you enter the land that Yahweh will give to you, just as He said, then you shall observe<sup>73</sup> this service.

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<sup>65</sup> The verb means “to draw a lamb out of the fold”

<sup>66</sup> The noun is singular, a lamb or a goat; but the context is addressing the people who each would be taking a small animal.

<sup>67</sup> The hyssop is a small bush that grows throughout the Sinai, probably the aromatic herb *Origanum Maru L.*, or *Origanum Aegyptiacum*. The plant also grew out of the walls in Jerusalem (1 Kgs 4:33). See L. Baldensperger and G. M. Crowfoot, “Hyssop,” *PEQ* 63 (1931):89-98. A piece of hyssop was very useful to the priests because it worked well for sprinkling.

<sup>68</sup> The Greek and the Vulgate translate *saph* as “threshold.” Kaiser reports how early traditions grew up about the slaying of the lamb on the threshold (p. 376).

<sup>69</sup> Literally: “and you, you shall not go out, a man from the door of his house.”

<sup>70</sup> The first of the two clauses begun with perfects and *waw* consecutives may be subordinated to form a temporal clause: “and He will see . . . and He will pass over,” becomes “when he sees . . . He will pass over.”

<sup>71</sup> Here the form is the *hiphil* participle with the definite article. Gesenius says this is now to be explained as “the destroyer” although some take it to mean “destruction” (GKC, par.126 l N.).

<sup>72</sup> “you” supplied

<sup>73</sup> The verb used here and at the beginning of verse 24 is *shamar*; this can be translated “watch, keep, protect” but in this context “observe” the religious customs and practices set forth in these instructions. Judaism, of course, has complied with this injunction by including these

**12:26** And when your children say to you, “What does this service mean<sup>74</sup> to you?”— **12:27** then you will say, ‘It is the sacrifice<sup>75</sup> of Yahweh’s passover, when He passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt, when He destroyed<sup>76</sup> Egypt, and delivered our households.’” And the people bowed down low<sup>77</sup> to the ground. **12:28** And then the Israelites went away and did as Yahweh had commanded Moses and Aaron, so did they.

## EXPOSITORY DEVELOPMENT

The twelfth chapter of Exodus forms a turning point in the development of the book: it is the culmination of the ten plagues on Egypt and the beginning of the actual deliverance. Moreover, the celebration of this festival was to become a central part of the holy calendar for Israel.

Naturally, the exposition will include the New Testament antitype somewhere in the discussion: Christ is our passover. The most appropriate way to handle the correspondence would be to expound these thirty verses thoroughly first for the theology, that is, God's redemption of His people through the rite of the passover blood, clearly explaining its meaning for Israel in Egypt and for Israel in subsequent ages, and then make the correspondence to the New. I would not treat it as prophecy, even though typology is a form of prophecy, for if you simply preach Christ from every part you run the danger of eisegesis and ignore the necessary step of leading the full interpretation out of the historical setting in which it was

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details in the Passover *Haggadah* (the “telling”).

<sup>74</sup> Literally, “what is this service to you?”

<sup>75</sup> This expression “the sacrifice of Yahweh’s passover” occurs only here. The word *zebakh* means “slaughtering” and so a blood sacrifice. The fact that this word is used in Leviticus 3 for the Peace Offering has linked the Passover as a kind of Peace Offering, both of which were eaten as communal meals.

<sup>76</sup> The verb means “to strike, smite, plague”; it is the same verb that has been used throughout this section (*nagaph*). Here the construction is the infinitive construct in a temporal clause.

<sup>77</sup> The two verbs form a verbal hendiadys: “and the people bowed down and they worshiped.” Both words are synonyms, and so one is taken as the adverb for the other.

revealed.

Any arrangement of the material would probably take the first thirteen verses as a unit, for they instruct the institution of the passover; then verses 14-20, which are concerned with the feast of unleavened bread, could be a section; and finally, verses 21-30 would complete the unit, for they record how it all worked out.

*I. The LORD inaugurates his plan to deliver his people from judgment through the shed blood of a sacrifice (1-13).*

The institution of the Passover (12:1-13) has many details that could be discussed in the exegesis, the beginning of months, the lamb without blemish, the application of the blood, the eating in haste, and the judgment of Egypt. Besides treating the theological significance of these ideas, you will need to spend some time on the interpretation of “Passover.” Verse 12 gives the explanation of “passover” with ‘*abar*, the LORD would “Pass over” the land and destroy the unprotected first born. A good discussion on the various views of this name and the feast may be found in Segal's book on the Passover. But the point is, of course, that the sacrificial blood applied to the house is protective because it is substitutionary. The firstborn, who represents the future of the family, will be redeemed. Conversely, those who ignored the rite of the blood experienced judgment.

An area that needs to be probed is the manifold correspondence of the New Testament. Christ is the “begotten Son” of God, but also the Passover lamb. So in the fulfillment the substitutionary “lamb” that brings redemption is also the “Son,” the Seed of Abraham. When the Old Testament images overlap like this, the expositor must determine how much more may be said about the complexity of God’s plan. In Exodus the firstborn sons died in the substitutionary animals; in the New Testament the Son died as the substitution.

*II. The LORD prepares his people concerning the removal from binding and corrupting elements of the world (14-20).*

The institution of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (12:14-20) follows in the legislation. Verse 14 needs some attention since it calls this feast a memorial. Brevard Child's book *Memory and Tradition* is helpful here because it begins with a word study on “memory.” The point is not simply to remember this event

forever--it is to relive it, to activate it experientially. Also, sooner or later you will have to do a word study on "forever." The word has to be restricted by context, much like the English word "ever." It can refer to the past or to the future (see along with this Barr's book on words for time).

In verses 15 and 16 the warnings are given. They are not to eat leaven or they could be cut off (probably physical death). Holy convocations and days of rest frame this special week. Naturally you will have to determine the symbolism of leaven. Certainly by Paul's time it represented evil; but in the Old Testament that is not immediately clear. It may have included more, such as permeation and fermentation.

Verses 17-20 reiterate the laws of unleavened bread, the time of the feast, and the reason for it--the deliverance from Egypt. Seeing this connection is rather difficult. One can determine that Passover was the plague of death that destroyed Egypt and delivered Israel, but Unleavened Bread is difficult. Probably it was to signify the results of the deliverance, the removal of all corrupting or binding influences in Egypt. That is at least how Paul takes it in 1 Corinthians 5.

*III. Those expecting to be redeemed from the world  
respond obediently to the LORD's commands (12:21-28).*

The instruction of the people (12:21-28) brings about worshipful compliance.

This section need not receive as much attention since it reiterates the points from before. But what needs to be stressed here is the obedience and worship of the people (verses 26-28). This is one result of the LORD's instituting the festival.

The other result is the divine judgment on Egypt in 12:29, 30. It is a judgment on Egypt that brought a great outcry, for death was everywhere. Now was fulfilled the warning God had given Pharaoh--let Israel my firstborn go or I shall kill your firstborn. The impact of this great plague of death can only be imagined today.

## CONCLUSION

The exposition could end at verse 28, or at verse 30. The message would only be slightly altered. If I were preaching through the book, I would use verses

29, 30 both at the end of this message and as part of the next. In this one it is sort of an after thought. The message develops God's requirement for deliverance through the application of the blood, God's instruction of the memorial of deliverance through purging out of corruption, and the compliance of those who reverently believe the warnings.