

## Immerse Day 25 :: March 5 (by Jackie Splinter)

With 10 plagues behind us and as many broken promises, are we exhausted yet? Are Moses and Aaron exhausted yet? And how about God? Does He get exhausted by Pharaoh's stubbornness (or by ours)? Even before the 10 plagues were initiated, Moses and Aaron had announced what God would do if Pharaoh didn't let His people go. But each plague seemed to make Pharaoh's heart harder, and eventually judgement must (and will) come into play. We see that God has given Pharaoh every opportunity to change his mind. But there are always consequences for sin, and God is about to get really tough! Moses warns Pharaoh of one last plague...the killing of the first born son of every family in Egypt, not even Pharaoh's son would be spared. And the first born of all of Egypt's livestock will also perish (question here...if all the livestock were killed in plague #6, where did these livestock come from?). Moses warns Pharaoh that at midnight a "wail will arise throughout the land, a wail like no one has heard before or would hear again. But among the Israelites it will be so peaceful that not even a dog will be heard barking!" By now the Egyptian people have clearly gotten the message. Even Pharaoh's highest officials are urging him to relent. Will Pharaoh finally cease to defy God and His messengers? Nope! Pharaoh had hardened his heart to the point of no return, and even a promised catastrophe can't soften it. Moses leaves the scene, burning with anger...and weary, I imagine, with the knowledge that "here we go again"!

And the scene shifts. The story stops. We are now introduced (in very specific detail) to God's plan for a new Jewish Holiday...The Lord's Passover (aka the Festival of the Unleavened Bread)...to be established to celebrate Israel's deliverance and to remind people of what God had done. But God hasn't rescued them yet. Perhaps this is an example of chiasmic literature that was mentioned in our Introduction to Exodus chapter. Words and sentences are repeated in a reverse order (I really have no idea). Or the writer of this story, presumably Moses, is simply giving us a sampling of what's to come. As it turns out, the Hebrews follow God's instructions to the letter by smearing the blood of a sacrificial lamb on their door frames, a substitute for the person who would have died in the plague. As Christians we know that this foreshadows the blood of Christ, The Lamb of God, who gave his blood for the sins of all people.

Back to the story. At midnight, while the Hebrews are preparing their yeastless bread (and are dressed and ready to travel, having stripped the Egyptians of their wealth) the Lord carries out His promised devastation. Pharaoh is broken and calls for Moses and Aaron. "Get out. Take your flocks and herds and be gone. Worship your Lord but bless me as you go." That's a little ironic...covering his bases, I guess! 430 years in Egypt, many of which had been served in hard labor as despised slaves. The total number of people leaving Egypt is estimated to have been about 2 million (I looked this up!). Remember the 70 who had first relocated there during Joseph's reign as Governor...talk about multiplying. And "the many people who were not Israelites" may have been Egyptians who were drawn by God's mighty works and chose to leave Egypt with His people. God never wastes an opportunity to win souls for His kingdom. How do (or do?) our lives invite others to be followers too?

The final paragraphs of this particular Exodus story, focus on a new ritual that God has called His people to observe, to dedicate to Him...and here again we encounter the concept of sacrifice. The Hebrews are being directed to surrender their first born offspring too, of both humans and animals. This is a largely (but powerfully) symbolic ritual, as it serves as a means to remember what the Lord had done to free them from slavery and to save their own sons from death on that desperate night. God has a rightful claim to these lives, but He instead commands the Israelites to buy back, in a sense to redeem, their sons from Him...and so continues the story of Redemption, the central theme of the Bible.