

PASSOVER

THE LESSON: EXODUS 12

Our Christian faith and history are rooted in the Jewish faith and history that we find in the Hebrew scriptures, the Old Testament. This means that to better understand some of our practices, we have to look back.

Consider this: on the night of the Last Supper, when Jesus introduced to his disciples what we now call “Holy Communion”, they were eating the *Passover* together. So in order to dive into the meaning behind Holy Communion, we need to take a look at where the feast of the Passover comes from.

Here’s the background: there had been a great famine and the people of Israel had gone to live in Egypt, where there was food. But while they were welcomed as guests when they arrived (during the time of Joseph), a few centuries later they had become slaves to the Egyptians and their suffering was great. The second chapter of Exodus tells us that “the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help... And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. God saw the people of Israel—and God knew”.

What followed was a long process during which God, through Moses and Aaron, told the Egyptian Pharaoh to let his people go. God sent plagues, but Pharaoh remained obstinate until the final tenth plague, at which point the people of Israel were finally freed.

As we read through this passage that describes the very first Passover, keep in mind that this was the memorial that Jesus and his disciples were observing on the night before the crucifixion, when he said, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me... This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.”

AT-HOME CHALLENGE

Each morning and evening, follow the prayer plan that you created for yourself.

(If you didn’t make one, try saying the morning and evening prayers from the “Forms of Prayer to be used in Families”, which begins on page 728 of the BCP. If you don’t have a copy, you can look it up here: <http://prayerbook.ca/resources/bcponline/family-prayer>.)

Set aside a few moments when you pray, to quietly reflect upon this verse from scripture (John 1:29):

“Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.”

- AND/OR -

Take some time to pray through this intercession, pausing to reflect after each phrase.

Almighty God, who art afflicted in the afflictions of thy people: Regard with thy tender compassion those in anxiety and distress; bear their sorrows and their cares; supply all their manifold needs; and help both them and us to put our whole trust and confidence in thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(INTERCESSION FOR THOSE IN ANXIETY, BCP PAGE 54)

PASSOVER

EXODUS 12: **THE FIRST PASSOVER**

¹The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt... ³Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month every man shall take a lamb according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for a household. ⁴And if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his nearest neighbour shall take according to the number of persons; according to what each can eat you shall make your count for the lamb. ⁵Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats, ⁶and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs at twilight.

⁷“Then they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. ⁸They shall eat the flesh that night, roasted on the fire; with unleavened bread and bitter herbs they shall eat it. ⁹Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted, its head with its legs and its inner parts.

¹⁰And you shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn. ¹¹In this manner you shall eat it: with your belt fastened, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. And you shall eat it in haste. It is the Lord's Passover. ¹²For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the Lord. ¹³The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt... ¹⁴This day shall be for you a memorial day, and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord; throughout your generations, as a statute forever, you shall keep it as a feast...”

²¹Then Moses called all the elders of Israel and said to them, “Go and select lambs for yourselves according to your clans, and kill the Passover lamb...” ²⁸Then the people of Israel went and did so; as the Lord had commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did.

²⁹At midnight the Lord struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of the livestock.

³⁰And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he and all his servants and all the Egyptians. And there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where someone was not dead. ³¹Then he summoned Moses and Aaron by night and said, “Up, go out from among my people, both you and the people of Israel; and go, serve the Lord, as you have said...”

⁵⁰All the people of Israel did just as the Lord commanded Moses and Aaron. ⁵¹And on that very day the Lord brought the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt by their hosts.