

# THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

## EXODUS 12-13

For the last 3,450 years Jews all over the world have observed the ancient celebration called, **Passover**. Jewish families join in *a seder*, or a ceremonial meal, and they remember the night recorded in Exodus 12...

During the Passover there is a moment when the youngest child asks the father of the family four questions... 1) *Why is this night distinguished from all other nights? On this night we eat only unleavened bread.* 2) *On all other nights we eat any kind of herbs, but on this night only bitter herbs. Why?* 3) *On all other nights we do not dip (our vegetables in the salt water), but tonight we dip twice. Why?* 4) *On this night we all recline in our chairs at the table. Why?* The father uses these questions to retell the story in today's chapters...

God instituted this feast so succeeding generations of Israelis would never forget their exodus from Egypt.

Verse 1, *"Now the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, 'This month shall be your beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you.'*" Though they don't yet know it yet, in a matter of days the Hebrews will leave Egypt and 400 years of bondage. And their exodus will take place in the month of **Abib**, or as it will later be called **Nisan**.

This month will forever mark Israel's new beginning, *a new day of freedom!* And the events surrounding the Hebrews' deliverance will be so monumental God will altered their calendar to note their significance.

Prior to the exodus the first month of the Jewish year was in the fall - the month of Tishri. But now the new year will be celebrated in the spring - March / April to us - the month of Abib on the ancient Jewish calendar.

Actually, today Jews recognize both new years. Tishri is the first month on the *civil calendar* and Nisan is the first month on *the sacred or religious calendar*.

Their New Year was to begin with a feast known as **Passover**. And as we study the Passover it's important to remember Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 5:7, *"For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us."* For in a million ways the Passover is a type of Jesus. The feast foreshadows the freedom **Jesus** brings when He enters our lives. *And here's the first parallel...*

As the Passover launched a new day for Israel, the work of Jesus marked a new day in world history... *and it too, sparked a change in the calendar.* Prior to the sixth

century our calendar used the distinction **Anno Mundi** or “Year of the World,” but in 525 AD the Church replaced it with **Anno Domini** or “Year of our Lord...”

This is where we get the abbreviation **A.D. (Anno Domini)**. *In the west - in countries which have been influenced by Christianity* - we no longer date years from creation, we now count our years from the birth of Christ. **Jesus has also altered our calendar!**

So God tells Moses, “**Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying: 'On the tenth day of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb, according to the house of his father, a lamb for a household.'**”

Later, God will give **The Levitical Law** to Moses. It'll contain religious rules that are to be carried out by the priests from the tribe of Levi. And under the Law God will institute **seven feasts** for His people to observe.

The Passover though is unique, *it's included in the seven Levitical feasts, but it predates them.* And there are elements to it that supersede Levitical Law. *The Passover points to something greater than the Law!*

When the Passover was instituted there were no priests or altar or Tabernacle or Temple. It was a family sacrifice. The father of each family selected a lamb.

“**And if the household is too small for the lamb, let him and his neighbor next to his house take it according to the number of the persons; according to each man's need you shall make your count for the lamb.**” *Here's a good example of how men complicate God's Law...* Notice, God leaves it up to “**each man's need.**” Some of us like to *eat more*, some *eat less* - so God said just take what your family can eat and share the rest with others... In years to come Jewish rabbis won't be able to leave it at that, and will specify you need at least ten people per lamb. Thus, if you have more than twenty guests a second lamb is required.

Verse 5, “**Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats.**” On Nisan 10<sup>th</sup> a lamb was selected to be sacrificed. It had to be “**male,**” and “**without blemish**” or **without defect**. If you had a sickly or crippled lamb in your herd that you figured would die anyway, you couldn't use him as your offering. You slaughtered a lamb that was healthy and whole - a valuable sacrifice.

And it's interesting that in the year 32 AD when Jesus of Nazareth rode His donkey down the Mount of Olives to the cheers of the crowd, if you had looked at the calendar, the date was **Nisan 10th**. The Jews thought they were welcoming a king. They didn't realize they were actually choosing a Passover lamb who was “**male**” and “**without blemish**” or defect, or sin.

“Now you shall keep (the lamb) until the fourteenth day of the same month.” You selected your lamb on the 10th and kept it until the 14th. So for four days you fed, watered, cared for that lamb. And the kids would get attached. They’d play in the field with the lamb. That little lamb would become a pet - even part of the family.

But then on the 14th, “The whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight.” Four days after the lamb was selected it got *slaughtered*... And all the while you’re putting the knife to the throat of what’s become your household pet you’re struggling with your emotions. *Is this really fair?* This lamb has done nothing wrong. He’s innocent... *why should he suffer?*

You’re watching your wooly pet squirm. You hear it moan; then whimper; then gasp its last as it slumps over in a motionless heap. You smell the stench of its blood, and realize you need to carve up the meat. *Your little lamb is now lamb chops!... And you’re the one now squirming.* For it hits you - *your sin and stupidity took an innocent life.* This lamb received the penalty you deserved. He paid the consequences for your sin.

And this is what happened to Jesus. 2 Corinthians 5:21 tells us, “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us.” At Jesus’ triumphal entry on Sunday, Nisan 10th, the Jews hailed Him their Messiah, their King, but four days later He was nailed to a wooden post - a Roman cross. The Gospels even tell us that Jesus died just before twilight. Jesus was truly our Passover lamb.

It’s interesting how food specifically illustrates our forgiveness. Realize, for you and I to live something has to die. Every thing we eat was once alive. It was either pulled from the ground, or picked from a tree, or it was a butchered animal. We enjoy a juicy hamburger and never think of where *the meat we eat* came from. We walk into a Five Guys restaurant having never thought of what happens at the slaughterhouse.

People who eat that burger were never forced to look into the eyes of the animal who gave its life for their enjoyment and sustenance. You and I reap the benefits of the animal’s sacrifice without ever counting the cost.

**But the Passover made you count the cost.** It made you appreciate not only the animal, but the God who was willing to receive it’s sacrifice in exchange for your sin... Sin and injustice leaves a debt in the world that begs to be paid... What if you stole my car and wrapped it around a telephone pole. *That would be costly.* We’d all agree someone has to pay, and 99% of us would say that someone should be you! *But what if you can’t pay? What if I drove a Lamborghini? Of course I don’t, but what if I did? Then you would be obligated to me for the rest of your life, plus some!*

And now I would have a choice to make! I can keep you in my debt, or reach deep

into my pocket and pay the damages myself. If I pay, you go free - but it's not because there was nothing for you to pay, it's because I paid it all for you! *This is the meaning of forgiveness.* It's not just a random act of charity, where someone decides to ignore or forget the evil that was done. Forgiveness is God choosing to absorb the cost of your sin and injustice - *the cost of which is death* - and free you from your debt by sacrificing His only Son. It's one thing to appreciate the transaction of forgiveness intellectually, *but the Passover taught it emotionally.*

Now with this Passover lamb, **"They shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses where they eat it."** The *"lintel"* was the door's header which sat on it's two posts. Blood was smeared on both - horizontally and vertically. Look at the door and the bloodstains formed a cross. On the last night in Egypt blood was applied to each house.

And notice, they don't just kill the lamb, they add insult to injury and smear its blood on their door. It was humbling - it expressed their need for salvation to the neighborhood.. And this is why it's not enough for us to just mentally acknowledge Jesus' died on a cross. You don't truly believe, until you smear His blood on your life's front door, and claim Jesus as your own, and personally identify with Him and His sacrificial death.

**"Then they shall eat the flesh on that night; roasted in fire, with unleavened bread and with bitter herbs they shall eat it."** The **unleavened bread** became a symbol of their faith. They would be leaving Egypt the next day and there'd be no time for the bread to rise.

And the **bitter herbs**, or **"maror"** as the Jews call it, was the horseradish. It's so hot it brings tears to your eyes, *which is the point.* It's a reminder of the nation's 400 years of bitter enslavement in the land of Egypt.

So much of the biblical instruction we receive today comes through preaching and teaching, and as a result it involves only our minds. It's limited. But the Passover celebration is powerful because it involves **all five senses**. God wants us not only to *hear* of our salvation, but to *taste it, touch it, smell it, see it!* The Passover wrote God's mercies on the people's hearts.

Verse 9 is a recipe for lamb chops, **"Do not eat it raw, nor boiled at all with water, but roasted in fire - its head with its legs and its entrails. You shall let none of it remain until morning, and what remains of it until morning you shall burn with fire."** The sacrifice was to be totally consumed! Which is why Jesus died such a horrific death. Jesus gave His all on the cross. He paid our sin in full. **There were no leftovers at Passover.**

“And thus you shall eat it: with a belt on your waist, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. So you shall eat it in haste.” No stocking the refrigerator with cold cuts. The Hebrews ate the first Passover ready to leave. They would exit Egypt the next day, so they spent the night in their boots. Their bags were packed. Their staff was by their bedside.

And Moses said of this memorial meal, “It is the LORD's Passover. For I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast (notice even the firstborn of the animals will die); and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD.”

Again, God mentions that the ten plagues had all been a direct assault on the idols of Egypt. Each plague had called out and judged a different Egyptian deity. Even this last plague... against Pharaoh's heir... his firstborn was held by the Egyptians to be divine.

And it's interesting, the Hebrews were as vulnerable to this plague as the Egyptians. Israel had also stooped to worship the false gods of Egypt. A couple of the plagues God supernaturally engineered to bypass the Hebrews in Goshen, *but not this one*. Death will come to Hebrews the same as Egyptians unless they take advantage of the remedy prescribed in verse 13...

“Now the 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 the plague shall not be on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.” This is the origin of the term “*Passover*.” Throughout Egypt, God will **pass over** both Hebrew and Egyptian houses. The homes that pass inspection and God sees blood on the doorway He'll save the firstborn of that household. Where the blood is not applied the firstborn child dies.

Understand salvation that night had nothing to do with the morality or purity of those inside the house. You could be moral, *and assume for goodness sake*, judgment will pass over you, but without the blood, *sorry, say good-bye to your big brother*. Death would strike a house full of boy scouts if it lacked the blood...

Salvation came to folks, even the unsavory sort, who recognized their need for the blood, and applied it to their doorway. They were saved by faith and trusted in God's promise to accept the blood as payment for their sin... *And this is how God decides eternal destinies today*. Trust in your own merit and you're a goner. Trust in the blood of Jesus and judgment will **pass over** you.

Verse 14, “So this day shall be to you a memorial; and you shall keep it as a feast to the LORD throughout your generations. You shall keep it as a feast by an everlasting ordinance. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall



remove leaven from your houses. For whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel.” *Unleavened bread*, or bread cooked without a rising agent, was a type of faith. Whereas, *leaven* spoke of pride and sin.

**Leaven** is a perfect type of sin. Like leaven or yeast, sin corrupts by *puffing up*. Ridding a house of leaven is a picture of purging a life of pride and evil habits.

And **Unleavened bread** speaks of faith. Deliverance for the Hebrews was imminent. There was no time for the bread to rise. They could leave at any moment. And as Christians we need the same expectant faith.

Now from verses 16-20 God gives instructions for how the Passover is to be observed annually in Israel.

Passover will be on the first day of a seven day feast known as “*The Feast of Unleavened Bread*.” From Nisan 14th through 21st all Israel will eat unleavened bread. Any violators will be cut off from the community.

And verse 17 says all this will be a reminder of the day God brought His “*armies out of the land of Egypt*.” Amazing, the Hebrews were slaves, conditioned for four centuries to be a subjugated people, yet God calls them “*armies!*” This was the most dysfunctional army in history. But apparently, God sees His people not as they are, but as He intends for them to be. *Perhaps He does the same when He calls us the **Bride of Christ**.*

Verse 21, “*Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel and said to them, “Pick out and take lambs for yourselves according to your families, and kill the Passover lamb.”* The elders are to lead by example.

“*And you shall take a bunch of hyssop...*” Hyssop is a leafy branch that’s highly absorbent. This is how the blood was applied, with hyssop... And again, faith involves application. It’s more than just mental assent. A believer becomes a stakeholder. You integrate your identity and hopes and goals with Jesus. And the more you absorb the better! Take “*a bunch of hyssop*” - not a twig, **but a bunch!** Immerse yourself in Christ.

“*Dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and **strike** the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood that is in the basin.*” On the cross Jesus was struck or bruised for us. “*And none of you shall go out of the door of his house until morning. For the LORD will pass through to strike the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the LORD will **pass over** the door and not allow the destroyer to come into your houses to strike you.*” “*The destroyer*” - perhaps the name of an ominous angel - will do the dirty work and strike those who fail to apply the Passover’s blood.

Verses 24-27 reiterates the Passover is forever. It's to be repeated by all generations. *And it has been!* As a modern author writes, "Three thousand, five hundred years of slavery, tyranny, dispersion, and the Holocaust have never stopped the miracle of Passover."

We're told at the end of verse 27, "So the people bowed their heads and worshiped. Then the children of Israel went away and did so; just as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did. And it came to pass at midnight that the LORD struck 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 livestock." That night the destroyer came on every bloodless house in Egypt. Seven million people lived in Egypt. That's a little more than today's population of metro Atlanta. Imagine, every house in our city losing a firstborn child. That's an unprecedented scale of death.

And there's historical evidence for this judgment. In Egypt where mummification and the preservation of the dead were emphasized archeologists have found mass graves dating back to this time period. It was as if a plague killed more people than Egypt could handle.

Also, in light of what we discussed last week, if the Pharaoh confronted by Moses and Aaron was **Amenhotep II**, his successor was his son, **Thutmose IV**. Today, visit the Great Sphinx at the Pyramid of Giza and you'll notice a large stone tablet between its paws. This slab records the dream of **Thutmose IV**, where the young king tries to legitimize his right to the throne.

If **Thutmose** had been **Amenhotep's** first born son, his right to rule would've gone unquestioned. Evidently though, he was not the firstborn. **Thutmose IV** was probably a younger sibling of the firstborn brother, the original heir to the throne, who died in the tenth plague.

Verse 30, "So Pharaoh rose in the night, he, all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where there was not one dead." God's angel was quick and lethal.

"Then (Pharaoh) called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, "Rise, go out from among my people, both you and the children of Israel. And go, serve the LORD as you have said. Also take your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and be gone; and bless me also." And the Egyptians urged the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste. For they said, "We shall all be dead." God has totally defeated the Egyptians, morally and spiritually as well as physically.

“So the people took their dough before it was leavened, having their kneading bowls bound up in their clothes on their shoulders. Now the children of Israel had done according to the word of Moses, and they had asked from the Egyptians articles of silver, articles of gold, and clothing. And the LORD had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they granted them what they requested. Thus they **plundered the Egyptians.**” It was a *peaceful plunder. It was back wages for 400 years of slavery.* This is the silver and gold that will become the materials out of which the Tabernacle and its furnishings will be built.

Verse 37, “**Then the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about 600,000 men on foot, besides children.**” That could be 2-3 million people on the move out of Egypt. A mass migration is beginning.

But there was one problem in an otherwise glorious day. “**A mixed multitude went up with them also, and flocks and herds - a great deal of livestock.**” This mixed multitude were opportunists. They jumped on Moses’ bandwagon. There were *Egyptians who’d smeared the blood on their house, slaves from other countries who had done so, even Egyptians who’d married Hebrews.*

This mixed multitude were people who smeared the blood, but still held to their Egyptian roots. And they will cause Moses problems. They’ll want to return to Egypt.

“**And (the Hebrews) baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they had brought out of Egypt; for it was not leavened, because they were driven out of Egypt and could not wait, nor had they prepared provisions for themselves.**” When you work nonstop for Pharaoh you don’t get a lot of time off to shop for your exodus.

Verse 40, “**Now the sojourn of the children of Israel who lived in Egypt was 430 years. And it came to pass at the end of the 430 years - on that very same day - it came to pass that all the armies of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt.**” According to verse 41, the Hebrews left Egypt the exact same day they entered, 430 years later. They left on the anniversary of Jacob’s arrival. This was God’s way of affirming that He had never forgotten *His people, or His covenant with them.*

Verse 42, “**It is a night of solemn observance to the LORD for bringing them out of the land of Egypt. This is that night of the LORD, a solemn observance for all the children of Israel throughout their generations.**”

Notice, the unique terminology used of Passover. It’s called “*that night of the LORD.*” We speak of Sunday as “*the Lord’s Day,*” but Passover is “*the Lord’s night.*”

And in the remainder of the chapter God makes the point that only those who are circumcised should eat Passover. Circumcision was the mark, the sign of the



covenant, that God had made with Abraham and his heirs. And only those who are part of the covenant can participate in its blessings. The same is true of the New Covenant. **Don't expect the blessings of a relationship with God without also agreeing to its responsibilities.**

One other point from this passage, in verse 46 God says of the Passover lamb **"nor shall you break one of its bones."** It's interesting, in a crucifixion to shorten the torture and speed up the the crucified's death the Romans would break his legs. This prohibited him from hiking himself up to catch another breath. The victim died of asphyxiation. But remember, when the Roman soldier came to break Jesus' legs he saw that he was already dead and didn't bother. Thus, it fulfilled the Passover *that not one of His bones was to be broken.*

Verse 50, **"Thus all the children of Israel did; as the LORD commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did. And it came to pass, on that very same day, that the LORD brought the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt according to their armies."** And again this is a band of rag-tag, undisciplined, unskilled slaves with no military training at all, yet for the third time they're called, **"the armies of the LORD."** God's plan was to bring Israel out of *bondage* into *battle*. And they need to be ready.

*And the same is true for us...* A wonderful freedom over sin, and guilt, and the Law comes to those who are in Christ. But if you're not ready to fight the world, the flesh, and the devil you'll get sucked right back in. Thus, after God delivers us from bondage He has to arm us for battle. A Christian needs to expect to fight.

Now in Chapter 13, God gives the liberated Hebrews two reminders or memorials of their deliverance from Egypt. *And we also have two reminders of our salvation: communion and baptism.* The Hebrew are to annually keep **the Feast of Unleavened Bread**, and **offer God the firstborn of their flocks and families.**

Verse 1, **"Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Consecrate to Me all the firstborn, whatever opens the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and beast; it is Mine."** Since God saved the firstborn of the Hebrews from the destroyer, He now expects them to **"consecrate,"** that is **"dedicate"** their firstborn to Him.

And here's the principle for us - **the redeemed of the Lord belong to the Lord.** You don't usually buy a car for someone else to own and drive. You expect to possess what you purchase. Likewise, *God purchases a person to take possession of them. God wants to rule what He redeems, especially the people He saves.*

Verse 3, **"And Moses said to the people: "Remember this day in which you went out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the LORD brought you**

out of this place. No leavened bread shall be eaten. On this day you are going out, in the month Abib.” The Hebrew word “*Ab*” means “*green*.” Thus, the month of Abib was the month everything turned green. It was springtime - our March / April. “*Abib*” was the month’s name in the early days of the Hebrew nation. Later the name will get changed to Nisan. But it was in this month, the first month, that along with *Passover*, the Jews celebrated *the Feast of Unleavened Bread*.

But notice what God’s commands... “*Remember this day in which you went out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the LORD brought you out of this place.*” It is crucial that you and I remember the work that God has done in our lives! I’ve heard it said, “*Satan’s strategy is to cause you to remember the things you ought to forget and to forget the things you ought to remember.*” A bad memory is one of the greatest hindrances to our spiritual victory.

Once a group of 30 year old friends had a reunion. They decided to go to dinner. One person suggested the Glowing Embers Restaurant because the waiters and waitresses are all young and energetic...

Well, the same group of friends reunited at age 45 and planned a dinner. Again they decided to go to the Glowing Embers Restaurant because the food choices were so good... Fifteen years afterwards, at age 60, again the group of friends met for dinner. They agreed to go to the Glowing Embers because you can eat there in peace and quiet... At age 75 the friends reunited and chose the Glowing Embers because there were no steps into the building and it had an elevator...

And finally, at age 90, the group met one final time for their 15 year reunion. After discussing it, they all said they wanted to go to the Glowing Embers Restaurant... *because they’d never been there before!* When it comes to what God has done... don’t forget!

“And it shall be, when the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, which He swore to your fathers to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey, that you shall keep this service in this month. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a feast to the LORD. Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days. And no leavened bread shall be seen among you, nor shall leaven be seen among you in all your quarters.”

Again, **leaven** is a type of sin... **Passover** is a symbol of deliverance... And Passover came first - it was followed by the seven day *feast of unleavened bread*. And this same progression occurs in our lives. We come to Jesus, our Passover, and He takes us *just as we are*, and *right where we’re at*. His love is unconditional. He doesn’t

look at what or who is in the house. He only wants to see the blood on the door. God doesn't expect us to clean out the leaven until we're forgiven and belong to Him... But once we're His; then His goal is to rid our lives of the actions and attitudes that displease Him. *We get rid of the leaven!*

Verse 8, "And you shall tell your son in that day, saying, 'This is done because of what the LORD did for me when I came up from Egypt.' "It shall be as a sign to you on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes, that the LORD's law may be in your mouth; for with a strong hand the LORD has brought you out of Egypt. You shall therefore keep this ordinance in its season from year to year." Notice the emphasis here on sharing our deliverance story with our kids. *This is the job of a Christian parent and grandparent.* Talk to your kids about what Jesus means to you. Tell them how you were converted to Christ. Rehearse your sacred history with your children and grandchildren.

Verse 11 explains *The Law Of The Firstborn...* "And it shall be, when the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites, as He swore to you and your fathers, and gives it to you, that you shall set apart to the LORD all that open the womb, that is, every firstborn that comes from an animal which you have; the males shall be the LORD's." This law of the firstborn required every big brother lamb, goat, or cow to be sacrificed to the Lord - with a couple of important exceptions...

"But every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb; and if you will not redeem it, then you shall break its neck. And all the firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem." A lamb took the place of a firstborn donkey. And firstborn humans were redeemed with a sum of money that was an offering to the Lord.

And isn't it interesting here, how **donkeys and humans get paired together!** *Could it be because both are notorious for their stupidity and stubbornness?*

Verse 14, "So it shall be, when your son asks you in time to come, saying, 'What is this?' that you shall say to him, 'By strength of hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. And it came to pass, when Pharaoh was stubborn about letting us go, that the LORD killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of beast. Therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all males that open the womb, but all the firstborn of my sons I redeem.' God established these laws and rituals to be certain that future generations would always remember His work of deliverance and redemption from Egypt.

"It shall be as a sign on your hand and as frontlets between your eyes, for by strength of hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt." God is saying never forget what I did in Egypt. Let my deliverance guide your **hands or actions** - and focus your **eyes or**

thoughts.

Of course, the rabbis took verse 16 literally and created phylacteries - leather straps and pouches containing Scripture portions. Even today, orthodox Jews carry the story of the exodus between their eyes and on the back of their hands. Yet God's instructions were not intended to be taken literally, but figuratively. The Hebrews are to **always remember** their salvation.

"Then it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, "Lest perhaps the people change their minds when they see war, and return to Egypt." So God led the people around by way of the wilderness of the Red Sea. And the children of Israel went up in orderly ranks out of the land of Egypt." Though God referred to the Hebrews as "*armies*," He knew they weren't ready for war. Rather than enter Canaan by the coast, facing an enemy immediately, God chose an alternate route.

There's an old joke you've probably heard, "Why did the children of Israel wander in the wilderness for forty years?" *The answer?* "Because like most men, Moses was too stubborn to stop and ask for directions!"

Although the joke illustrates a truth about the male species, it's not biblical. For Moses was not the one who led the children of Israel. *God was their guide!*

And God didn't lead Israel out of bondage to abandon them. They were *freed so they could follow...*

This is why you and I have been forgiven, and set free... **to follow Jesus!** God doesn't save us, just so we can occupy a seat at church until He returns. After we're saved we embark on a journey. God has specific plans and purposes for your life and future.

God promised Israel He'd lead them to *a new land*, but first He teaches them *a new way*. God takes them to Mount Sinai, where Moses got his marching orders. He'll give them His law, and teach them to worship.

Verse 19, "And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for (Joseph) had placed the children of Israel under solemn oath, saying, "God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here with you."

So they took their journey from Succoth and camped in Etham at the edge of the wilderness. And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night. He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day or the pillar of fire by night from before the people." Israel had a miracle for a GPS - a supernatural guidance system. Before them you saw a column of cloud by day, and a wall of fire at night.

Recall Genesis 15, when God walked through the animal parts to seal the covenant with Abraham, He appeared as a burning torch and smoking censer - *fire and cloud*. Now for the next forty years this is how God will lead the Hebrews through the Midianite desert: *when God moves, Moses moves - when God stops, Moses stops....* That's not a bad way for us to live!