

Exodus 12:37-51, 13
July 27, 2014

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: Who knows who Elizabeth Barrett Browning is? [Famous poet from England who wrote a sonnet called “How Do I Love Thee, Let me Count the Ways] Let me read her poem to you: <http://www3.amherst.edu/~rjyanco94/literature/elizabethbarrettbrowning/poems/sonnetsfromtheportuguese/howdoilovetheeletmecounttheways.html>

Q: If you’re married, think of your spouse. If you’re single, think of your children or your best friend. If you were to write a poem that started with “How do I Love you? Let me count the ways,” give me some of your lines? Just throw them out there. [Let people have some fun with taking out the trash, cooking meals, etc, and see if they go deeper with it.]

Q: Let’s take this a step further. If Jesus were sitting with us today, and we had the opportunity to share our poem entitled “How Do I Love Thee, Let me Count the Ways,” what are some of the lines you would write for Jesus? [Let people wrestle with this. Be prepared to process why this exercise might have become harder.]

We have spent the last two months watching the Lord deliver his children from slavery in Egypt. He used ten plagues in order to show His mighty works to His children. Last week we saw God deliver the last plague, which was to kill all the firstborns of Egypt (animals or humans). However, He protected all Israelite homes that had blood on their doorposts. I think it’s fair to say that if God were a poet, His OT poem of “How He Loved His Children” would include multiple ways He protected them while the plagues against Egypt were going on.

Transition: After God went through all of this trouble to deliver His “firstborn son” (the Israelite people), He has a few expectations that He wants from His children. Our clues will come from the verbs spoken by the Lord or Moses as we read the rest of Chp 12 and all of Chp 13. I invite you to **look for key verbs** to help us understand the WAYS God wants to be “loved” or remembered by His children. By the end of class, we should be able to re-write Browning’s poem by inserting the ways God wants to be loved. Let’s begin.

BOOK (NIV 1984): [Read Ex 12:37-51]

Observations/Process Qs-

V.37:

- The Israelites journeyed from Rameses to Succoth. There were about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides women and children.

V.38:

- Many other people went up with them, as well as large droves of livestock, both flocks and herds.

V.39:

- With the dough they had brought from Egypt, they baked cakes of unleavened bread. The dough was without yeast because they had been driven out of Egypt and did not have time to prepare food for themselves.

V.40:

- Now the length of time the Israelite people lived in Egypt was 430 years.

V.41:

- At the end of the 430 years, to the very day, all the LORD's divisions left Egypt.

V.42:

- Because the LORD kept vigil that night to bring them out of Egypt, on this night all the Israelites are to keep vigil to **honor the LORD** for the generations to come.

V.43:

- The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "These are the regulations for the Passover:
 - "No foreigner is to eat of it.

V.44:

- Any slave you have bought may eat of it after you have circumcised him,

V.45:

- but a temporary resident and a hired worker may not eat of it.

V.46:

- "It must be eaten inside one house; take none of the meat outside the house. Do not break any of the bones.

V.47:

- The whole community of Israel must celebrate it.

V.48:

- "An alien living among you who wants to celebrate the LORD's Passover must have all the males in his household circumcised; then he may take part like one born in the land. No uncircumcised male may eat of it.

V.49:

- The same law applies to the native-born and to the alien living among you."

V.50:

- All the Israelites did just what the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron.

V.51:

- And on that very day the LORD brought the Israelites out of Egypt by their divisions.
- Q: What verb(s) caught your eye that tells us what God is looking for us to do. [See yellow highlight above]

[Read Ex 13]

V.1:

- The Lord said to Moses,

V.2:

- "**Consecrate** to me every firstborn male. The first offspring of every womb among the Israelites belongs to me, whether man or animal."
- Q: What does consecrate mean? [To set apart for the Lord]

V.3:

- Then Moses said to the people, “**Commemorate** this day, the day you came out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery, because the LORD brought you out of it with a mighty hand. Eat nothing containing yeast.

V.4:

- Today, in the month of Abib, you are leaving.

V.5:

- When the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Hivites and Jebusites—the land he swore to your forefathers to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey—you are to **observe this ceremony** in this month:

V.6:

- For seven days eat bread made without yeast and on the seventh day hold a festival to the LORD.

V.7:

- Eat unleavened bread during those seven days; nothing with yeast in it is to be seen among you, nor shall any yeast be seen anywhere within your borders.

V.8:

- On that day **tell your son**, ‘I do this because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt.’

V.9:

- This observance will be for you like a sign on your hand and a reminder on your forehead that the law of the LORD is to be on your lips. For the LORD brought you out of Egypt with his mighty hand.

V.10:

- You must **keep this ordinance** at the appointed time year after year.

V.11:

- “After the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites and gives it to you, as he promised on oath to you and your forefathers,

V.12:

- you are to **give** over to the LORD the first offspring of every womb. All the firstborn males of your livestock belong to the LORD.

V.13:

- **Redeem** with a lamb every firstborn donkey, but if you do not redeem it, break its neck. **Redeem** every firstborn among your sons.
- Q: What does redeem mean? [Purchase back something that had been lost, by the payment of a ransom. Or, to pay a price in order to secure the release of something or someone. It connotes the idea of paying what is required in order to liberate from oppression, enslavement, or another type of binding obligation.]

V.14:

- “In days to come, when your son asks you, ‘What does this mean?’ say to him, ‘With a mighty hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.’

V.15:

- When Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the LORD killed every firstborn in Egypt, both man and animal. This is why I sacrifice to the LORD the first male offspring of every womb and redeem each of my firstborn sons.’

V.16:

- And it will be like a sign on your hand and a symbol on your forehead that the LORD brought us out of Egypt with his mighty hand.”

V.17:

- When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them on the road through the Philistine country, though that was shorter. For God said, “If they face war, they might change their minds and return to Egypt.”

V.18:

- So God led the people around by the desert road toward the Red Sea. The Israelites went up out of Egypt armed for battle.

V.19:

- Moses took the bones of Joseph with him because Joseph had made the sons of Israel swear an oath. He had said, “God will surely come to your aid, and then you must carry my bones up with you from this place.”

V.20:

- After leaving Succoth they camped at Etham on the edge of the desert.

V.21:

- By day the LORD went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night.

V.22:

- Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people.
- Q: What verb(s) caught your eye that tells us what God is looking for us to do? [See yellow highlights above.]

LOOK:

So here's how Elizabeth Browning's Sonnet might be re-written by a faithful Israelite:

- I keep a vigil at night to honor you, Lord, and for the generations to come. (12:42)
- I consecrate every firstborn male to you. (13:2)
- I commemorate every Passover to recognize that you delivered me from slavery with a mighty hand. (13:3)
- I tell my children at Passover why we celebrate, so they understand that you brought me out of Egypt out of slavery. (13:8)
- I keep your ordinance of Passover at the appointed time every year. (13:10)
- I give over to you, LORD, the first offspring of every womb. (13:12)
- I redeem every firstborn of my sons for you, Lord. (13:13)

We don't live in OT times, so how do we honor the Lord today? What or who is consecrated? How should we be commemorating God?

- Recognize that we commemorate, honor, consecrate, etc, through the lives we live for Him. Sheila Walsh, ***“Our lives are one, long worship service to the Lord.”***
- **Word Picture:** Put offering plate on the floor and stand in it to symbolize “I give my life back to the Lord. The Lord redeemed me. He bought me at a great price. My life is not my own.”

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament* (Ex 12:8–13:22). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

IV. The Lamb Eaten (12:8–20, 43–51)

We often neglect this important part of the Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Leaven (yeast) in the Bible is a picture of sin: it works silently; it corrupts and puffs up; and it can only be removed with fire. The Jews had to put all leaven out of their homes at Passover season, and they were not allowed to eat leavened bread for seven days. Paul applies this to Christians in 1 Cor. 5; read the chapter carefully.

The blood of the lamb was sufficient to save from death, but the people had to feed on the lamb to get strength for their pilgrim journey. Salvation is just the beginning. We must feed on Christ if we are to have the strength to follow Him. Christians are a pilgrim people (v. 11), always ready for their Lord's orders to move on. The lamb was to be roasted with fire, which speaks of the sufferings of Christ on the cross. Nothing was to remain to be eaten later; no "leftovers" can satisfy the believer, for we need a whole Christ. We need a completed work on the cross. Furthermore, leftovers would become corrupt, and this would ruin the type; for Christ did not see corruption (Ps. 16:10). Alas, too many people receive the Lamb as their salvation from death, but they do not feed on the Lamb daily.

Verses 43–51 give further instructions concerning the feast. No stranger could participate, nor could a hired servant or one who was uncircumcised. These regulations remind us that salvation is a birth into God's family—no strangers are there. It is by grace—no one can earn it. And it is through the cross—for circumcision points to our true spiritual circumcision in Christ (Col. 2:11–12). The feast was not to be eaten outside the house (v. 46), for the feast cannot be separated from the shed blood. Modernists who want to "feed on Christ" apart from His shed blood are fooling themselves.

V. The Lamb Trusted (12:21–42)

It took faith to be delivered that night! The Egyptians thought all these things were foolishness, but God's Word had spoken and that was enough for Moses and his people. Please keep in mind that the people were saved by the blood and assured by the Word (v. 12). No doubt many of the Jews were safe under the blood who did not "feel safe," just as we have saints today who doubt God's Word and worry about losing their salvation. God did exactly what He said He would do. And the Egyptians urged the Jews to leave the land, just as God said they would (11:1–3). God was not one day late. He kept His Word.

VI. The Lamb Honored (13)

The lamb had died for the firstborn; now the firstborn would belong to God. The Jews were a "purchased people" just as we are God's purchased people (1 Cor. 6:18–20). The nation would forever honor the Lamb by giving their firstborn—their best—to the Lord. The hands, eyes, and mouth would be given to Him for His service (v. 9).

God led His people, not on the nearest way, but on the way that was best for them (vv. 17–18), just as He does today. The pillar was a cloud by day and a fire by night. God always makes

His will clear to those who are willing to follow (John 7:17). He saves us, feeds us, guides us, and protects us—and yet we do so little for Him!

Joseph knew what he believed and where he belonged. His tomb in Egypt was a reminder to the Jews that one day God would deliver them. On Joseph's bones, see Gen. 50:24–26, Joshua 24:32, and Heb. 11:22.

Toussaint, S. D. (1985). Acts. (J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck, Eds.)The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures. (Vol. 2, pp. 129–131). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

12:37–42. **From Rameses**, where apparently the people were concentrated (cf. 1:11), they **journeyed** to **Succoth**, present-day Tell el-Maskhuta near Lake Timsah. The number of Israelite **men** was **about 600,000** (in 38:26 and Num. 1:46 the exact figure is 603,550). With **women and children**, the number of Israelites was about 2 million. With them were non-Israelites of an undesignated number, apparently a variegated group (a “rabble,” Num. 11:4). In the wilderness they caused the Israelites to complain against Moses.

En route the people **baked ... unleavened bread** (cf. Ex. 12:34). Moses concluded this section about the beginning of the Exodus with a historical notation, a reminder of God's faithfulness, and a call to remembrance. The length of Israel's time **in Egypt** is here said to be **430 years** (cf. Gal. 3:17), while other passages state that it was 400 years (Gen. 15:13, 16; Acts 7:6) and “about 450 years” (Acts 13:20; cf. comments there). Apparently the total time in Egypt was 430 years (from 1876 B.C. to 1446 B.C.; cf. comments on Acts 7:6; Gal. 3:17). The fact of God's care over His people on the **night** of the Exodus should be remembered. Since He **kept vigil** over **them** they should **keep vigil to honor** Him. They were told to be careful and vigilant because He is.

12:43–51. At Succoth, **Moses and Aaron** were given **regulations** about celebrating the **Passover** (vv. 43–51) and instructions for the dedication of the firstborn (13:1–16). The several regulations for the Passover were apparently necessitated by the non-Israelites who joined the Exodus and had identified with the religion of the Hebrews. If a man did not identify with the covenant promises by the rite of circumcision he could not **celebrate** the **Passover** (12:44, 48–49). The feast was to be centered **in the home** and observed by the entire **community** (cf. vv. 3, 6, 19).

13:1–16. After an introductory statement about the Israelites' **firstborn** (vv. 1–2), who were to be dedicated for the service of **the LORD** (since they were spared in the 10th plague), **Moses** addressed **the people** again about the Passover and the Unleavened Bread feasts (vv. 3–10), and then returned to the subject of the **firstborn** (vv. 11–16).

Again **Moses** reminded the people of the importance of the day of their deliverance (cf. 12:24–27) from **the land of slavery** (lit., “slave house”) by God's **mighty hand** (cf. comments on 3:19) **into the land of promise**. (On **the Canaanites** and other groups mentioned in 13:5, see comments on 3:17; and on the **land flowing with milk and honey** see comments on 3:8). This victorious event was to be remembered annually in the **ceremony** of the **seven-day festival** of **Unleavened Bread**.

Like the Passover (12:26–27), the Feast of Unleavened Bread had great educational value in the home (13:8–9). The feast was **like a sign on their hand or forehead**, that is, it was a continual reminder of God's mighty deliverance from **Egypt**. Some orthodox Jews today

interpret that passage (and Deut. 6:8; 11:18) literally and bind passages of the Law (viz., Ex. 13:2–10; Deut. 6:4–9; 11:13–21) on their arms and foreheads in small pouches, so-called phylacteries, though this was probably not God’s intention.

Once in the land of promise (Ex. 13:11), the **firstborn** sons and male animals were to be dedicated **to the LORD** (cf. v. 2; Num. 18:15). Animals were included because “they too benefited from the redemption which God provided in the 10th plague” (Davis, *Moses and the Gods of Egypt*, p. 154). Since donkeys were considered ceremonially unclean animals (Lev. 11:2–4) they could not be sacrificed, but they could be redeemed (*pādāh*, “to buy back for a price”) by lambs sacrificed in their place. Of course since human sacrifice was unacceptable the Hebrews’ **sons** were also to be “redeemed.” This too would have teaching value in the home (cf. Ex. 12:26–27; 13:8). The Egyptian **firstborn** were slain, in judgment, and the Israelite “firstborn” were either slain (the animals) in substitutionary **sacrifice** or redeemed (the **sons**). Like the Feast of Unleavened Bread (vv. 7–9) the consecration of the firstborn was a sign and **symbol**, a reminder of God’s powerful deliverance (v. 16). Both were reminders of God’s gracious deliverance from the land of bondage.

13:17–22. The shortest route to the land of Caanan was **through the** territory of the Philistines in the direction of Beersheba and the Negeb. It led along the Mediterranean Sea, the military road of the Egyptians. But the route chosen by **God** was southeastward toward the Sinai to avoid possible military confrontations with Egyptian guards who might encourage the people to **return to Egypt**. The exact location of the desert road is uncertain but it probably led to the Bitter Lakes (see the map “Possible Route of the Exodus,” near Num. 33:1–5). **Armed for battle** probably means organized for march rather than equipped with armor, bows, and arrows for warfare.

Moses had heard of Joseph’s request that his **bones** be taken from Egypt (cf. Gen. 50:25), so he honored that request. Later Joseph’s bones were buried at Shechem (Josh. 24:32). Stephen indicated that the remains of other sons of Jacob were taken there also (Acts 7:15–16; see comments there).

After some time at **Succoth** the Israelites journeyed to **Etham** (see the map “Possible Route of the Exodus,” near Num. 33:1–5). Supernaturally guided by a **pillar of cloud** in the daytime, which became a **pillar of fire** at **night**, the Israelites apparently traveled some distance every day. Besides guiding them, the cloud, symbolizing God’s presence, assured them of His goodness and faithfulness. (There was one cloud, not two; cf. Ex. 14:24.) The people were brought to **the edge of the desert** (cf. Num. 33:6).

Cabal, T., Brand, C. O., Clendenen, E. R., Copan, P., Moreland, J. P., & Powell, D. (2007). The Apologetics Study Bible: Real Questions, Straight Answers, Stronger Faith (pp. 104 – 106). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

12:37 How could the Israelites have become so numerous during their years in Egypt? The Bible seems to claim that the 75 males of Jacob’s family had increased to more than 600,000 males age 20 and older in Moses’ time (603,550 at the time of the first censuses taken at Mount Sinai—see 38:26; Nm 1:46). This has struck many scholars as impossible, especially if one accepts that Jacob was Moses’ great-great-grandfather.

Two considerations make plausible this rapid growth from 75 to 600,000 males. First, Ex 1:7 states that “the Israelites were fruitful, increased rapidly, multiplied, and became extremely numerous so that the land was filled with them.” Furthermore, 1:9–12 suggests that the Israelites’ dramatic population increase was the primary factor in Egypt’s decision to oppress them. The

Bible clearly affirms that the Israelites experienced explosive growth in population once they arrived in Egypt.

Second, the evidence in both the OT and NT suggests that 215 years elapsed between Jacob's entry into Egypt and the exodus (see note on 12:40). It is mathematically possible for Jacob's twelve sons to have produced a nation with a population of more than 600,000 males in slightly more than two centuries. During this period from five to eight generations of Israelites could have lived, depending on the family line. Moses' line was five—Levi, Kohath, Amram, Moses, Gershom and Eliezer (see 6:16–20; 1 Ch 6:1–3); Joshua's was apparently eight—Joseph, Ephraim, Shuthelah, Laadan, Ammihud, Elishama, Nun, Joshua (see 1 Ch 7:20–27). The number of sons produced by each family would vary, depending on how many generations were involved. For 8,600 Kohathite males to have been alive at the time of the exodus (see Nm 3:28) would have required each family to produce an average of seven sons; the 40,500 adult males in Joshua's tribe at the time of the exodus narrative (see Nm 2:19) would require four to five sons per family. While such large families might be considered unusual, the numbers are consistent with the claims of Ex 1. It is worth noting that many individuals in the Bible were said to have produced more than seven sons—Abraham had eight (Gn 25:1–2, 9), Jacob had 12 (Ex 1:1–5), Jair and Ibzan had 30 (Jdg 10:4; 12:9), Abdon had 40 (Jdg 12:14), Ahab had 70 (2 Kg 10:1), and Gideon had 71 (Jdg 9:56).

12:40 How much time did the Israelites spend in Egypt? The Hebrew text used as the basis for English translations of this verse states literally that “the dwelling of the sons of Israel which they dwelt in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years.” The Samaritan Pentateuch, on the other hand, states that the Israelites spent 215 years in Egypt. The difference in numbers may not be a true contradiction, but the result of different ways of computing Israel's time in Egypt. The Samaritan Pentateuch, following a very old tradition that is reflected in the NT (see Gl 3:17), probably arrived at the figure 215 by starting with the number 430 and then factoring in certain events associated with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. By taking into account the number of years between Abraham's visit to Egypt and the birth of Isaac (25 years, see Gn 12:4; 21:5), Isaac's age when Jacob was born (60 years, Gn 25:26), and Jacob's age at the time he entered Egypt (130 years, Gn 47:9), the editors of that version concluded that Jacob's descendants spent 215 years in the land.

The Septuagint likewise clarifies the number 430, but does so in a different way. It expands the reading found in the Hebrew text, stating that “the dwelling of the sons of Israel, *and of their fathers*, which they dwelt *in the land of Canaan, and* in the land of Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years” (italics added).

The NT provides conclusive evidence that the chronological clarifications in the Samaritan Pentateuch and Septuagint are accurate. In Gl 3:17 the apostle Paul noted that the Law was given to Israel 430 years after God's covenantal promise had been delivered to Abraham. The first-century Jewish historian Josephus (*Antiquities* 2:15:2) accepted this number, as did many significant voices in Christian history prior to the twentieth century (e.g., Tertullian, Origen, Augustine, Bishop James Ussher). When the NT evidence is considered together with that of the OT, it seems clear that 430 years elapsed from the time of Israel's *first* entrance into Egypt, and that the reckoning began with Abraham's dealings with Pharaoh (Gn 12:10–20).

12:43, 48 Although the OT requires non-Jews adopting the faith of Israel to be circumcised, the NT discourages the practice (1 Co 7:18; Gl 5:2). The prophet Jeremiah foresaw a time when God would make a new covenant that would replace the one He made with Israel at Mount Sinai (Jr

31:31). Jesus Christ brought that new covenant into being through His sacrificial death on the cross (Heb 9:15). Through Christ a new relationship exists between God and humanity (2 Co 5:17; Gl 6:15), one that does not require men to be circumcised (see Acts 15:1–21).

13:12–16 Offering every firstborn male animal from their flocks required financial sacrifice on the part of the Israelites, yet the Lord required it. God is interested in more than his people's material prosperity; He also wants them to develop their values, character, and spiritual life. As each succeeding generation of Israelites gave its firstborn males to God, they would in some way recreate the exodus event. They would be reminded of the seriousness of sin; whenever they ate the meat of the animal, they would be reminded of the sacrificial meal eaten by their forefathers on the night of the exodus. By sparing their own firstborn sons through the death of a sacrificial animal, in obedience to the Lord's command, they would experience the lifesaving grace of God in a deep and unforgettable way. Unlike the Canaanites, who gave firstborn sons and daughters to their gods by killing them (Lv 18:21), the Israelites were to let their children live (Dt 18:10). They were to pay a redemption price for each child redeemed. The males of the tribe of Levi were then to serve as lifelong substitutes for the redeemed sons (Nm 3:12).

13:18 For a discussion of what is meant by "Red Sea," see note on 14:16.

13:21–22 According to Nm 10:29–31, Moses asked Hobab, son of his father-in-law Reuel (see note on Ex 3:1), to assist the Israelites during their time in the desert. As a local resident Hobab knew that area well, and his insights would be invaluable to the Israelites. His role, however, was only supportive. God would guide the covenant people to the promised land through the pillars of cloud and fire.

Was the pillar of smoke and fire simply the result of an altar fire being burnt by the priests? The Bible does not indicate the physical origin, if any, of the cloud or fire. However, it emphatically claims that throughout the exodus events the cloud was inhabited by God (v. 21) and possessed lifelike qualities. When Israel was threatened by the Egyptians the cloud moved between the Israelites and their enemies, expanding and spreading so as to hide the Israelites (14:19). Whenever Moses entered the sacred tent the cloud would descend and stand at the door (Nm 12:5). It could also come down and rise up again to execute judgment (Nm 12:5–10). These characteristics suggest that the cloud had supernatural origin and control. Even if a natural explanation could be found for it, the Bible makes it clear that this cloud was supernatural, in that God controlled it and His presence resided in it.