Exodus 7–13 — “Let My People Go”

> *Come, Follow Me 2026 — March 28–April 3*
>
> **Parallel Accounts:** Acts 7:17–36; 1 Corinthians 5:7; John 1:29; Mosiah 13:30; 1 Nephi 17:26–31; Revelation 8–9

Overview

Exodus 7–13 is one of the most theologically dense passages in all of scripture. What reads on the surface as a series of increasingly dramatic disasters is, at its core, a story about the nature of God, the nature of sin, the anatomy of a hardened heart, and the lengths to which a loving Father will go to win back a soul.

Pharaoh’s question from the previous section — “Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?” (Ex. 5:2) — is the question these chapters systematically answer. Plague by plague, God introduces himself to a civilization that has never known him. Each miracle dismantles one of Egypt’s nine chief gods. By the ninth plague, Ra himself — the supreme deity, whose divinity Pharaoh shared — has been publicly humiliated. By the tenth, there is nothing left for Pharaoh to hold onto except his pride, and even that finally breaks.

But the plagues are not primarily punitive. God says it himself: “For this cause have I raised thee up, to show in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth” (Ex. 9:16). The purpose of Pharaoh’s resistance is not that God wants him to suffer — it is that God wants his power and character to be known. He wanted to save Egypt as much as he wanted to save Israel. He gave Pharaoh ten chances. He started with the softest approach possible and escalated only when the gentler invitation was refused.[1]

The Passover in Exodus 12 is the hinge of the entire account. Everything before it builds toward it; everything after flows from it. It is the moment God institutes the first ordinance of remembrance in scripture — not after the deliverance is complete, but the night it happens, while their shoes are still on and the bread is still hot. He knows that if they don’t learn to remember this, nothing else will stick.[2]

And at the center of the Passover stands the lamb — without blemish, brought in on the tenth day, killed on the fourteenth. By day fourteen, it has a name. The family has become attached to it. The killing is not convenient; it is personal. That is the point.[1]

Key Concepts

1. *Dam* (דָּם) — Blood

The Hebrew word *dam* means blood, and it carries enormous weight across all ten plagues and the Passover. The first plague turns the Nile to blood (*dam*) — transforming the lifeblood of Egypt into an image of death. The Nile was not merely a river; it was the source of Egypt's fertility, agriculture, and prosperity. To turn it to blood was to declare that the source of life that Egypt trusted in was incapable of sustaining them.[3]

At the Passover, blood becomes protective. The blood of the lamb on the doorposts is the token by which the destroying angel "passes over" — or more precisely, hovers over and shields (see *Pesach*, below) — the house. Blood that once signaled death (the Nile) now signals life and redemption. The theological reversal is deliberate: what Egypt used to kill Hebrew infants (the Nile, to which they were cast) is now the very image of their judgment. And the blood of a lamb is what shelters Israel.

For the Christian reader, the connection to the blood of Christ is not merely metaphorical — it is the whole point (1 Cor. 5:7). The blood on the lintel and doorposts forms a cross-like pattern that the covenant community has marked themselves with. "When I see the blood, I will pass over you" (Ex. 12:13) — the criterion is not merit but the covenant sign.

2. *Chazaq* and *Kabed* (חָזַק / כָּבֵד) — The Hardened Heart

Two different Hebrew words are used to describe Pharaoh's hardened heart, and they carry different shades of meaning.

Chazaq (חָזַק) means "to be strong, firm, stiff" — used when Pharaoh himself does the hardening. It is the language of willful rigidity, the deliberate choice to lock oneself against influence.

Kabed (כָּבֵד) means "to be heavy, weighty, unresponsive" — sometimes translated as "hardened," sometimes as "dull." It is the language of a heart that has grown so accustomed to a certain way of being that it can no longer respond to stimuli. Like a callus on the skin — originally protective, eventually deadening.

The Joseph Smith Translation consistently clarifies that when the text says "the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart," the correct reading is "Pharaoh hardened his heart." God does not harden hearts against their will. What God does is present reality clearly — and a heart that is already chazaq will become kabed in response to that reality.[3] By the later plagues, Pharaoh's heart is not just stubborn; it is numbed. He has rehearsed the same pattern so many times (promise to let them go → plague lifted → revert) that genuine openness has become structurally impossible.

This is not a theological statement about predestination. It is a clinical observation about what repeated, unrepented sin does to the soul.

3. *Pesach* (פֶּסַח) — The Passover

The English word "Passover" suggests the destroying angel simply skipping over marked houses — a kind of divine bypass. The Hebrew *pesach* carries a richer meaning. The verb *pasach* appears in a related

context in Isaiah 31:5: "As birds flying, so will the Lord of hosts defend Jerusalem; defending also he will deliver it; and passing over (*pasach*) he will preserve it." Here *pasach* is paired with defending and preserving — the image is of a bird hovering over its nest with wings spread, shielding what is inside.

The destroying angel did not merely pass by the marked houses. It *hovered over them*, shielding them. The blood was not a "do not enter" sign; it was an invitation for divine protection to encamp.[2]

This changes how we read the ordinance. Placing the blood on the doorposts was not simply an act of identification (marking who was Israelite). It was an act of covenant — an invitation to divine overshadowing. Houses that bore the blood were houses that had actively sought God's covering. Those who "feared the word of the Lord among the servants of Pharaoh made his servants and his cattle flee into the houses" (Ex. 9:20) — even Egyptians could participate in this protection, if they chose to heed the word of the prophet.[1]

4. *Bechor* (בְּכוֹר) — The Firstborn

The Hebrew *bechor* means firstborn — specifically the firstborn son, who holds the birthright. The concept is central to both the plagues and the Passover.

God declares in Exodus 4:22: "Israel is my son, even my firstborn." This is the covenantal claim behind everything in Exodus — God is not liberating a workforce. He is reclaiming his *bechor*, the son of the covenant. Pharaoh's killing of the Hebrew sons was an assault on God's firstborn. The tenth plague — the death of Egypt's firstborn — is the proportionate response: you killed mine; now you will understand what that costs.[2]

But the Passover turns this typology Christological. Jesus is "the firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. 8:29), "the firstborn of every creature" (Col. 1:15), and in Revelation "the firstborn of the dead" (Rev. 1:5). The Passover lamb that dies so that the firstborn sons of Israel may live is a direct type of Christ, the Firstborn of the Father, who dies so that all of God's children may live. Paul makes the identification explicit: "For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. 5:7).

The tenth plague, then, is not merely justice — it is a shadow of the Atonement. The death of the firstborn is arrested only by the blood of the lamb.

5. *Matzah* (מַצָּה) — Unleavened Bread

The Passover meal requires *matzah* — bread made without yeast, baked in haste. The immediate reason is practical: there is no time to let bread rise. They are leaving that night.

But the symbolism runs deeper. Leaven (*chametz*) in Israelite thought represents corruption, pride, and the slow process by which something pure becomes puffed up and sour. Paul uses leaven as a direct metaphor for sin (1 Cor. 5:6–8), and Jesus warns against "the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees" (Matt. 16:6). Before the Passover, Israel was commanded to purge all leaven from every house (Ex. 12:15) — a physical enactment of spiritual cleansing.

Matzah is also connected to *matzah* the verb, meaning "to drain out, to squeeze dry" — bread from which everything superfluous has been removed. It is the bread of affliction (Deut. 16:3) and the bread of haste (Ex. 12:39), but it is also the bread of simplicity: what remains when you strip away everything except necessity. In this sense, the unleavened bread is a portrait of a soul purged of pride and corruption, stripped down to covenantal essentials, ready to move at a moment's notice.[2]

Section-by-Section Commentary

Exodus 7-8: The First Four Plagues — "The Finger of God"

Moses made a god to Pharaoh (Ex. 7:1): God tells Moses he has made him "a god to Pharaoh." The JST softens this: Moses is a *prophet* to Pharaoh, and Aaron is his spokesman. The distinction matters. We are not to deify prophets — to put them on a pedestal so high that when their humanity shows, our faith collapses. But we are equally wrong to reduce true prophets to mere spokespeople, as if their authority were only social or institutional. A true prophet speaks "all that I command thee" (Ex. 7:2) — hard sayings included.[3]

Aaron's rod swallows the magicians' (Ex. 7:12): When Pharaoh demands a sign, Aaron casts down his rod and it becomes a serpent. The magicians match the feat — but Aaron's serpent devours theirs. The pattern is established: the world can mimic the surface phenomena of divine power, but it cannot ultimately compete with it. The truths of God will eventually swallow the falsehoods of man. Just wait.[3]

The three-set plague pattern: The first nine plagues fall into three groups of three, each group following a repeating pattern:[2]

- **Plagues 1, 4, 7** (Blood / Flies / Hail): Moses confronts Pharaoh in advance with a warning
- **Plagues 2, 5, 8** (Frogs / Livestock disease / Locusts): God tells Moses to meet Pharaoh at the Nile
- **Plagues 3, 6, 9** (Lice / Boils / Darkness): The plague comes without warning

The structure communicates divine patience and intentionality. God is not reacting; he is conducting. Each set escalates. Each triplet ends with a plague Pharaoh cannot mitigate, negotiate, or pretend away.

Plague 1 — Blood (Ex. 7:14–25): The Nile turns to blood. Fish die. The land stinks. Egyptians dig for water along the riverbanks. The Nile was sacred — home of Hapi, god of the Nile's floods, source of all Egyptian fertility. To turn it to blood was to publicly unmask the god of the river as powerless. The magicians can mimic the sign on a small scale, and Pharaoh uses this as reason to dismiss Moses. His response: he turns and goes into his house without setting his heart to it (Ex. 7:23) — Hebrew idiom for "paying no regard."[1]

Plague 2 — Frogs (Ex. 8:1–15): Frogs emerge from the Nile and fill the houses, the bedchambers, the ovens, the kneading troughs. The frog-headed goddess Heqet (Hekt) was a deity of fertility and childbirth. Again, the magicians can bring more frogs — they cannot take them away. This is the turning point: the world can make things worse; it rarely makes things better. Pharaoh for the first time asks Moses to intercede ("Entreat the Lord"). Moses gives him the honor of setting the time: "Tomorrow." Pharaoh chooses tomorrow — Moses could have said "right now," but the fact that Moses defers to Pharaoh's choice means that when the plague lifts exactly as scheduled, there is no natural explanation. When the frogs die, Pharaoh hardens his heart again.[3]

Plague 3 — Lice (Ex. 8:16–19): No warning. The dust of the land becomes lice. For the first time, the magicians cannot replicate it. They say to Pharaoh: "This is the finger of God" (Ex. 8:19). Even Pharaoh's own wise men are now acknowledging that what they are witnessing exceeds natural or magical explanation. Pharaoh ignores them.

Plague 4 — Flies (Ex. 8:20–32): The Goshen distinction appears for the first time. "I will sever in that day the land of Goshen… that no swarms of flies shall be there" (Ex. 8:22). God is making the division unmistakable: this is not pollution, coincidence, or natural consequence. It is a targeted act with a specific geographic boundary. The same divine word that sends the plague controls exactly where it lands. Pharaoh for the first time negotiates: "Go, sacrifice to your God — but in this land." Moses declines. "Not very far," Pharaoh offers. Moses again declines. Pharaoh promises to let them go — then hardens his heart when the flies depart.[1]

Exodus 9-10: Plagues Five Through Nine — "The Hand of God"

The escalation intensifies. God tells Moses to go to Pharaoh and warn that the next plague is not "the finger of God" but "the hand of the Lord" — something far larger is coming (Ex. 9:3).

Plague 5 — Livestock disease (Ex. 9:1–7): All Egyptian livestock in the field die. Israel's livestock are untouched. Pharaoh sends to verify — "and behold, there was not one of the cattle of the Israelites dead." He remains unmoved.

Plague 6 — Boils (Ex. 9:8–12): No warning. Moses throws handfuls of ashes into the air and boils erupt on man and beast throughout Egypt. The magicians cannot even stand before Moses — they are themselves covered in boils. The gods of medicine and healing (Sekhmet, Thoth, Imhotep) are powerless. Pharaoh's heart is hardened.

Plague 7 — Hail (Ex. 9:13–35): Massive hail with fire falls on all Egypt, destroying crops and killing everything in the field. Moses warns in advance: those who fear the word of the Lord are told to bring their servants and cattle indoors. "He that feared the words of the Lord among the servants of Pharaoh made his servants and his cattle flee into the houses" (Ex. 9:20). Even Egyptians could participate in the protection — the invitation was open to all who would heed the prophet's word.[1]

Pharaoh for the first time says: "I have sinned this time: the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked" (Ex. 9:27). This is the most explicit confession in the entire plague sequence. But when Moses prays and the thunder and hail cease, "he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart." The pattern is complete: acknowledgment without repentance is not conversion; it is just a temporary ceasefire.

Plague 8 — Locusts (Ex. 10:1–20): Even Pharaoh's servants now plead with him: "Knowest thou not yet that Egypt is destroyed?" (Ex. 10:7). Pharaoh negotiates again — "Who are they that shall go?" Moses answers: everyone. Young, old, sons, daughters, flocks — "we will all go young and old, we will leave no one behind." Pharaoh refuses: only the men may go. The locusts come and "cover the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened" (Ex. 10:15). Every plant, every tree, every green thing is consumed. Egypt is stripped bare.[2]

Pharaoh calls Moses in haste and says "I have sinned against the Lord your God, and against you. Now therefore forgive, I pray thee, my sin only this once" (Ex. 10:16–17). It is the prayer of one who wants the consequences removed, not the sin addressed.

Plague 9 — Darkness (Ex. 10:21–29): No warning. Thick darkness covers Egypt for three days — a darkness that can be "felt" (Ex. 10:21). No light could be kindled. "But all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings." Ra, the supreme god of Egypt — the deity whose divinity Pharaoh himself shared — is publicly annihilated. Nine of the nine gods have now been stripped of their claimed domain. By the end of this plague, Pharaoh "had a perfect knowledge" that Jehovah was God. He had, in every meaningful sense, a testimony.[2]

But knowledge without conversion is not faith. The devils also believe and tremble (James 2:19). Pharaoh trembles — and then issues his final negotiating position: "Go, serve the Lord; only let your flocks and your herds be stayed." Not your money, not your children this time — just your livestock. Moses refuses. Pharaoh explodes: "Get thee from me, take heed to thyself, see my face no more; for in that day thou seest my face thou shalt die" (Ex. 10:28). Moses agrees: he will not see Pharaoh's face again.

Exodus 11-12: The Tenth Plague and the Passover

The announcement of the final plague (Ex. 11): God tells Moses that one plague remains — and after it, Pharaoh will not merely let them go; he will "thrust you out hence altogether" (Ex. 11:1). The firstborn of every Egyptian, from Pharaoh's throne to the dungeon, will die. The cry of Egypt will be unlike anything heard before or since.

God tells Israel to ask their Egyptian neighbors for silver and gold before they leave. This is not theft — the word is *sha'al*, "to ask." The Egyptians, terrified and desperate for the Israelites to depart, will give freely. The plunder of Egypt is the back-payment for centuries of slave labor with no wages. "Ye shall not go empty" (Ex. 3:21).[3]

The Passover instructions (Ex. 12:1–28):

"This month shall be unto you the beginning of months" (Ex. 12:2). Before a single instruction is given, God resets the calendar. What is about to happen is so significant, so identity-defining, that time itself is marked differently from tonight. This is Year Zero for the nation of Israel.[1]

On the tenth day of the month, each household takes a lamb. The choice of the tenth day is deliberate — the Passover is on the fourteenth. For four days, the lamb lives in the house. It eats from the family table. The children play with it. By day fourteen, it has a name. And then it is killed.

The emotional investment is not an accident. God is not asking Israel to sacrifice an abstract principle or perform a rote ritual. He is asking them to kill something they have come to love. The lamb that dies so that the firstborn lives must first become dear. The typology is transparent: the Lamb of God was known, was loved, was personally dear to the Father — and was given willingly.[1]

The blood is struck on the two doorposts and the upper post of the house — a vertical and horizontal mark, a pattern that would later be recognized as the shape of the cross. "When I see the blood, I will pass over you" (Ex. 12:13). Not when I count the Israelites, not when I verify your lineage — when I see the blood.

The meal is eaten in haste: roasted lamb, unleavened bread, bitter herbs. Shoes on. Staff in hand. Ready to move at a moment's notice. Deliverance does not wait for comfortable preparation.

The first-born die; Israel departs (Ex. 12:29–51):

At midnight, the destroying angel moves through Egypt. "There was not a house where there was not one dead" (Ex. 12:30). Pharaoh rises in the night and calls for Moses and Aaron: "Rise up, and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve the Lord, as ye said." And then, in a moment of profound defeat, he adds: "And bless me also" (Ex. 12:32). He has felt the weight of the hand of God, and he knows — at least in this moment — that the only way forward is through Moses's God, not away from him.

The Israelites leave at the point of a sword, spoiling the Egyptians as they go. Six hundred thousand men, plus women and children — a mixed multitude that includes non-Israelites who chose to attach themselves to this covenant people. After 430 years (Ex. 12:40–41), "it came to pass the self-same day, that the Lord did bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt by their armies."

The command to remember (Ex. 12:14, 24–27; 13:3, 8, 14):

Five times in chapters 12–13 God commands Israel to observe, keep, and explain this feast — forever. To their children. To their children's children. When the son asks, "What mean ye by this service?" the answer is not merely historical information. It is an identity declaration: *We are the people God set free by the blood of the lamb.*

The Passover is the Old Covenant in miniature. Follow the prophet with exactness and haste; mark yourself with the blood of the lamb; the destroying angel will pass over you. This is the pattern. It will be

renewed at every Passover table for the next 1,400 years — until the night Jesus sits with his disciples and says, in effect: I am the lamb. Keep doing this. But from now on, the blood is mine.[2]

Literary and Structural Analysis

The Three-Set Structure of the Plagues

The nine plagues (excluding the Passover) divide neatly into three triads, each following a distinct announcement pattern:[2]

Set	Plagues	Pattern
1	1 (Blood), 2 (Frogs), 3 (Lice)	Warn at Nile / Warn at Nile / No warning
2	4 (Flies), 5 (Livestock), 6 (Boils)	Warn at Nile / Warn at Nile / No warning
3	7 (Hail), 8 (Locusts), 9 (Darkness)	Warn in advance / Warn in advance / No warning

The pattern mirrors a divine teaching strategy: escalating specificity of warning, culminating in judgment that comes without advance notice. God is fair. He gives warnings. He gives multiple warnings. But there comes a point where the warning itself becomes the judgment.

The Plagues vs. the Gods of Egypt

Each plague targeted a specific deity in the Egyptian pantheon, systematically demonstrating that Jehovah — the "He who causes to exist" — has dominion over every domain the Egyptians attributed to their gods:[2]

Plague	Egyptian God
Blood (Nile)	Hapi (god of the Nile)
Frogs	Heqet (frog-headed fertility goddess)
Lice/gnats	Geb (god of the earth)
Flies	Khepri (god of creation, scarab beetle)
Livestock	Hathor (cow goddess) / Apis (bull god)
Boils	Sekhmet / Thoth / Imhotep (healing gods)
Hail	Nut (sky goddess) / Shu (god of air)

Plague	Egyptian God
Locusts	Osiris (god of agriculture and fertility)
Darkness	Ra / Atum (sun gods)
Firstborn	Pharaoh himself (divine firstborn of the gods)

Goshen as Type

The Goshen distinction — beginning in plague 4 and continuing through the Passover — establishes a pattern of sacred separation that appears throughout scripture:[1]

- The stakes of Zion as places of refuge in the last days (D&C 115:6)
- The New Jerusalem as a place of peace when the world is in turmoil
- The sacrament as a weekly marker: "I am in covenant; the destroying angel sees the blood"
- The temple as the place where heaven and earth overlap and divine protection is most fully felt

The same pattern appears in the second coming language of Revelation 8–9, where plagues strikingly similar to Egypt's fall on the world — but covenant Israel, marked with the seal of God, is protected.

The Passover as Narrative Hinge

Structurally, the Passover in Exodus 12 functions as the center point of the entire Exodus narrative:

- Everything before it is *preparation* — plagues that demonstrate who God is
- Everything after it is *consequence* — a people walking in the covenant they have entered

The Passover is also the moment where the Exodus becomes *ritual*, not just history. From the night it happens, it is immediately institutionalized as an annual feast. God does not wait to see if the Israelites will remember. He commands them to remember before they have even had time to forget.

Connections to Restoration Scripture

Acts 7:17–36 (Stephen's sermon): Stephen's entire history lesson is a Moses-as-Christ typology. Every detail he chooses — Moses cast out, Moses rejected by his own people ("who made thee a ruler and judge?"), Moses returning as "a ruler and a deliverer" — is a dropped hint about Jesus. The Jews of Stephen's day are invited to see themselves not as the Israelites in the story but as the Egyptians: those who, having seen the finger of God, hardened their hearts. Stephen is stoned for making this point explicit.[3]

1 Corinthians 5:7: "For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us." Paul's identification of Jesus with the Passover lamb is not metaphor — it is hermeneutics. The entire Passover institution was designed

as a type pointing forward to the atoning sacrifice of Christ.

1 Nephi 17:26–31: Nephi invokes the plagues as evidence that God can command impossible things. "He caused the Egyptians that they should be drowned in the Red Sea." The Exodus is Nephi's primary apologetic when his brothers are doubting God's ability to deliver.

Mosiah 13:30–31: Abinadi explains the law of Moses before Noah's court: the law "was given… that they might look forward to [Christ] for a remission of their sins, that they might enter into the rest of the Lord." Every sacrifice in the law of Moses — beginning with the Passover lamb — was a sign pointing to the Lamb of God.

D&C 130:20–21: "There is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated." The Passover's covenant structure — specific instructions, specific obedience, specific protection — is one of the clearest early illustrations of this principle.

Revelation 8–9: The seven trumpet plagues of Revelation echo the plagues of Egypt in striking ways — waters turned to blood, locusts, darkness, death. The pattern of divine escalation that began in Egypt is the template for the final accounting. The message is the same: "You shall know that I am the Lord."

D&C 84:23–24: Moses sought to bring all Israel to the same experience he had at the burning bush — to see God's face, to enter his presence. The plagues, the Passover, the Red Sea, the wilderness — all of it was preparation for Sinai, where Moses hoped the entire nation would ascend the mountain and stand before God. They would not. But Moses kept trying.

Doctrinal Connections

God's desire to save his enemies: The plagues were sent to Pharaoh not only as judgment but as instruction. "I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart" (Ex. 9:14) — the plagues were targeted at a *heart*, not just a nation. God wanted Pharaoh's repentance, not merely Israel's release. The same love that reaches after a lost sheep reaches after the man who won't open his hand. That reaching has a limit — ten chances, not eleven — but the reaching is real.[1]

The anatomy of a hardened heart: The trajectory of Pharaoh's heart across the plagues is a clinical study in what unrepented sin does to a soul. It begins as stiffness (*chazaq*) — willful resistance. It ends as dullness (*kabed*) — an inability to respond. The man who at plague 1 simply "pays no regard" is the same man who at plague 9 threatens Moses's life. Pharaoh did not fall suddenly; he declined gradually, one refused repentance at a time.[3]

The Passover as covenant ordinance: The Passover is not merely a commemorative meal. It is a covenant act. The family that marks its doorposts with blood is declaring: *We are in covenant. We trust in the blood of the lamb. We are not our own.* The ordinance is both backward-looking (Egypt, slavery, deliverance) and

forward-looking (Christ, atonement, resurrection). Every Passover table from Exodus 12 to the Last Supper is simultaneously remembering and anticipating.

Prophetic exactness: The protection at the Passover required precise obedience — lamb without blemish, blood on the right posts, unleavened bread, shoes on. The protection at the hail storm required immediate action: bring your servants and livestock in *now*. The pattern recurs across scripture: when the prophet speaks, the timing and specificity of obedience matters. Moses's words to Pharaoh — "We will all go, young and old, we will leave no one behind" — set the template for how God's people care for each other in moments of crisis.[2]

Sources and Insights

Don't Miss This — David Butler & Emily Freeman

Butler and Freeman center their treatment on the theme that the plagues and the Passover together form the "national identity story" of Israel — the account that will be retold no fewer than ten times across the Old Testament, and repeatedly in the New Testament and Book of Mormon. Their key framing: the plagues are not just punishment. "God wanted to save Egypt as much as he wanted to save Israel." Pharaoh in his wrestle with God had the same choice Jacob had: become better or become bitter.[1]

Their reading of the Passover lamb — brought in on day ten, killed on day fourteen, named by the children in the meantime — brings out the emotional register of the ordinance in a way that purely theological analysis misses. God was not asking Israel to kill a concept. He was asking them to love something first, and then to trust him enough to give it up.[1]

Their connection of the Passover's "tell your children" command (Ex. 12:26–27) to the Serbian Easter egg tradition — families gathering in secret to dye eggs red and hear the oldest woman's testimony of Christ — makes the principle immediate and personal. Every generation must have its own way of telling the story.

Unshaken — Jared Halverson

Halverson's most powerful contribution is the structural reading of Stephen's sermon in Acts 7 as a Moses-as-Christ typology — and the uncomfortable application that the Jews of Stephen's day (and potentially us) are not the Israelites in the story but the Egyptians. Stephen was stoned for making that point explicitly. The question Halverson asks is: how are *we* re-enacting the Egyptian role? Are we dismissing living oracles the way Pharaoh dismissed Moses? Are we turning the living word of God into a dead letter?[3]

His “Pharaoh inversion” — reading Pharaoh not as Satan but as *you and me*, with our sins as the Israelites God keeps asking us to release — is one of the most spiritually productive reversals in all of his teaching. Every plague in this reading becomes a personal question: what consequence am I currently under that God has been patiently escalating to get my attention? What have I promised to give up and then quietly retrieved when the pressure eased?[3]

His treatment of the magicians’ progression (can mimic plague 1; can bring but not remove plague 2; cannot touch plague 3) as a commentary on the limits of worldly rationalism is equally powerful: the world can make things worse; it is the power of God alone that makes things better.

Gospel Talktrine — Mark Holt (S01E13B)

Holt provides the structural architecture of the plague sequence — the three-triplet pattern and how each group follows a distinct announcement pattern. This analysis shows that the plagues are not an improvised series of escalations but a deliberate, structured teaching curriculum designed to systematically dismantle every false theological claim Egypt made.[2]

His “testimony without conversion” analysis of Pharaoh after plague 9 is among the most striking theological observations in this material. By the time the sun fails, Pharaoh has seen enough. He *knows*. He has, in every cognitive and evidential sense, a testimony that Jehovah is God. And yet he will not repent. James 2:19 is the diagnosis: the devils also believe and tremble. Knowledge is not faith. Conviction is not conversion. The heart that has been hardened through ten rounds of unchosen repentance cannot simply decide to soften because the evidence is now conclusive.[2]

His point about the justice of the tenth plague — Egypt had been complicit in the systematic murder of Hebrew infant boys for generations; the killing of Egypt’s firstborn is not random divine terror but proportionate accountability — is sobering and important. Every generation that looks the other way on injustice eventually answers for the looking away.[2]

Personal Application

1. **Pharaoh inversion.** Before reading these chapters as a story about someone else’s stubbornness, ask: what is God trying to get me to “let go”? What are my Israelites — the sins, habits, or attachments — that God keeps asking to release, and I keep reclaiming once the pressure lifts?
2. **The cost of incremental hardening.** Pharaoh didn’t become the man of Exodus 10 overnight. Each refused repentance thickened the callus. The question is not just “what do I do with big temptations” but “what do I do with the small ones I keep excusing?”
3. **When God is patient, don’t mistake it for indifference.** Ten plagues. Ten chances. God’s long patience with Pharaoh was not weakness — it was love. His patience with us is the same. But patience is not indefinite, and the tenth plague always comes.

4. **Mark your home.** The Goshen distinction and the Passover both establish the same principle: being *near* the covenant community is not the same as being *in* covenant. The protection is house by house, heart by heart. What marks your home as a Passover home?
5. **Tell the story.** "When your children say unto you, what mean ye by this service?" — you are supposed to have an answer. Not a theological treatise. A story: *here is where I saw God deliver me*. President Eyring's injunction to write down how you've seen God's hand is the same commandment, restated for our generation.
6. **The lamb gets a name.** Whatever sacrifice God is asking of you right now, he knows it is dear to you. He is not asking you to sacrifice what costs you nothing. The Passover lamb had a name. So does yours.

Discussion Questions

- Halverson asks: if you're reading this story and you find yourself identifying with the Israelites — are you sure? What evidence is there in your own life that you might be Pharaoh, and what are your Israelites?
- The magicians say "this is the finger of God" after plague 3 but Pharaoh ignores them. When have you received spiritual witness from an unexpected source and either heeded or ignored it?
- Pharaoh's confession in plague 7 — "I have sinned; the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked" — is the most complete theological statement he makes. Why is it not enough?
- "This month shall be the beginning of months." Is there a personal "Year Zero" in your own life — a moment so significant it reordered how you measure time?
- What is the equivalent of the Passover meal in your home — the practice, tradition, or ritual that tells your children the story of how God delivered your family?

Footnotes

Further Reading

- Come Follow Me Old Testament Exodus 7-13 Mar. 28-Apr. 3 Dont Miss This - Dont Miss This
- Come Follow Me - Exodus 7-13 Let My People Go - Unshaken
- Bondage, Passover, and Exodus, Part 2 - S01E13B
- `Sources/PDFs/followhim_old_testament/14-OT-Dr.-Andrew-C.-Skinner-Exodus-7-13-followHIM-Podcast-SHOW-NOTES-ENGLISH.pdf`
- Atonement (for *pesach* and blood of the lamb connections)
- `Sources/PDFs/BYU OT Field Guide.pdf`

Previous Chapter

← Exodus 1–6 — The Burning Bush

Next Chapter

→ Exodus 14–17 — Parting the Waters

Footnotes

1. Butler, David and Freeman, Emily. “Come Follow Me Old Testament Exodus 7–13 (Mar. 28–Apr. 3).” *Don’t Miss This*, 2026. Come Follow Me Old Testament Exodus 7-13 Mar. 28-Apr. 3 Dont Miss This - Dont Miss This ↩ ↩2 ↩3 ↩4 ↩5 ↩6 ↩7 ↩8 ↩9 ↩10 ↩11 ↩12
2. Holt, Mark. “Bondage, Passover, and Exodus, Part 2 (S01E13B).” *Gospel Talktrine* podcast. Bondage, Passover, and Exodus, Part 2 - S01E13B ↩ ↩2 ↩3 ↩4 ↩5 ↩6 ↩7 ↩8 ↩9 ↩10 ↩11 ↩12 ↩13 ↩14
3. Halverson, Jared. “Come Follow Me — Exodus 7–13: Let My People Go.” *Unshaken* podcast, 2026. Come Follow Me - Exodus 7-13 Let My People Go - Unshaken ↩ ↩2 ↩3 ↩4 ↩5 ↩6 ↩7 ↩8 ↩9 ↩10

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