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## Plague of killing the firstborn

The swell of the heartless pharaoh still refused to free Israeli slaves. So God, he brought the last plague that was so terrible that it was certain to persuade the pharaoh to let his slaves go. That night, God sent the angel of death to kill the firstborn sons of the Egyptians. God told Moses to order Israeli families to sacrifice lamb and smear blood on the doors of their houses. In this way, the angel would know to 'hand over' the houses of the Israelites. That is why a festival commemorating the escape from Egypt is known as Passover. This picture shows several scenes from Passover. Right in the domed room, the angel of death is rocking his sword at the man in bed. Left, the pharaoh and queen mourn the death of their firstborn son. Below is a funeral scene with six men carrying a firstborn coffin. Page 2 Since the pharaoh refused to set the Israelites free, God decided to punish him, sending ten coincidences to Egypt. These include: Plague of blood. Enlarge God ordered Aaron to touch the River Nile with his staff - and the waters were turned into blood. The fish in the river died and the Egyptians couldn't drink water. Pictured, Egyptians are digging around the river in the spring. But all they found was a spring of blood. Plague boils enlarge the pharaoh, his servants, Egyptians and even their animals have developed painful boils all over the body. There were even boils on the feet of the pharaoh! The doctor attended the pharaoh's yard, but he couldn't cure them. Plague hail Enlarge God rained hail, fire and thunder on Egypt and hail knocked down all crops in the fields and shattered every tree. In the picture, hail stones (red and white dots) fall on to the tree, as the shepherd and his goats shelter beneath it. Hail was unusual in arid areas like Egypt and therefore very scary. Moses, on the right, begs God to stop the storm. A plague of loaves. Enlarge God told Moses to reach out over the land of Egypt to bring a plague of loaves. Loaves covered the face of the earth and devoured every harvest and all the fruits of trees. Then there was nothing green in the trees, and all the crops in the fields were destroyed. A plague of darkness. Enlarge Moses reached out his hand toward the sky, and there was thick darkness over the landscape of Egypt. This darkness was so complete that the Egyptians had to feel their way around. Then the pharaoh offered to give the Israelites free, on the condition that they let their sheep and cattle stay. But the Israelites needed their animals to be sacrificed to God, so they rejected the pharaoh's status. I've always been concerned about why all the firstborns in Egypt had to suffer in that last, devastating sea. The verses of the common Egyptian do not mention that it would be particularly bad for Jews to deserve such punishment. In addition, other Egyptians - as the daughter of a pharaoh, who Moses - actually did well. It seems that only the pharaoh and his government apparatus appeared to be bent by evil. Could you explain this to me? The killing of the firstborn will emanate from all other moths as God's retribution directed at the pharaoh and the whole of Egypt. Midrash (based on the verse: Behold, I will kill your son, even your firstborn - Exodus 4:23) teaches that initially, when God tried to bring moths to Egypt, he intended to begin with the sea of the firstborn. (Other moths were a response to the pharaoh's inconsiderable ness.) In order to fully understand this plague, we must appreciate the hierarchy within Egyptian civilisation. It was a primogeniture-dominated company. The firstborn had absolute power within the family unit. The pharaoh was firstborn. It was from this birthright that he exercised power. The attack against the firstborn was therefore a powerful controversy against the whole culture of Egypt. The oldest ruled the younger siblings. That's why having slaves was so important to Egyptians. It gave the lower class someone else control and dominate. Netziv (Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin) explains this idea based on a song that was sung after the division of the sea: Then he sang Moshe and the Israeli people this song to the Lord, and spoke, saying, I will sing to the Lord, because he triumphed famously ... The horse and his rider threw him into the sea. (15:1, 15:21) The main part of the song seems to be the idea of a horse and a rider. Netziv explains that this verse encapsulates the defeat of Egypt: the philosophy of the horse and the rider. As a rider rides a subordinate horse, so the rider must listen to the officer, and that officer listen to the general, and that the general listen to the commander-in-chief. According to Netziva, this describes the horrors of Egyptian society, a series of horses and riders, where Jewish slaves became the bottom of the proverbial totem pole - the lowest horse supporting the entire structure. That's why they were loath to release slaves, because the whole society would fall apart without them. Now we understand why the death of the firstborn child was so inevitable for Exodus and why the division of the sea provoked such a strong reaction. The philosophy of horse and rider sank at sea. The death of the firstborn was the beginning of this last chapter of liberation, where leading riders were to die. Now we understand that the death of the firstborn was not just another sign of God's power. No, this plague struck at the very epicenter of Egyptian civilization, paving the way for liberation. In Judaism, as we have seen many times, birth does not guarantee a position. The Tory scholar who tainted the line takes precedence over a high priest who does not know. The whole book of Genesis, in fact, is a controversy against an older son. Abraham wasn't a firstborn. Isaac wasn't a firstborn. Jacob not firstborn. Joseph wasn't a firstborn. Even King David was not a firstborn. (Midrash Rabba - Bamidbar 4:8) It's only Jacob's willingness to serve God that has transformed him into a firstborn. On the other hand, real first-born children have lost their status. Originally, the temple service transferred to the firstborn, but when they committed the Sin of the Golden Calf, the Levites had the privilege of entering their place. (Midrash Rabba - Bamidbar 4:8) One day, the messiah himself deserves to be called a firstborn. It will help teach the world that being a child of God transcends the line. Indeed, being the firstborn of God is about how we lead our lives - the manifestation of the image of God within is not a matter of the sequence of birth. (source: Rabbi Ari Kahn) Copyright © 1995 - 2020 Aish.com that is non-profit and needs your support. Please donate to: [aish.com/donate](http://aish.com/donate) or mail check to: Aish.com c/o Jerusalem Aish HaTorah Fund PO Box 1259 Lakewood, NJ 08701. Due to limited resources, ask the rabbi service is designed for Jews of small backgrounds with nowhere else to turn. People with questions in Jewish law should consult their local rabbi. Note that this is not a home service! Page 2 Why did Jews worship the Golden Calf? After receiving the Ten Commandments, Moses ascends Mount Sinai and stays there for 40 days. Uncertain when Moses will return and fear he has died, the Israelites feel lost and leaderless. They make the idol of the golden calf. Then get drunk and have an. (Exodus 24:15-18) Music is just one part of the rock concert's appeal. The crowd is drunk or tall; it's dark, and the noise is overwhelming. In this disoriented atmosphere of screaming and passion, we are briefly liberated from our own fragile individuality and swept away by the strength of the crowd. That sense of relaxation is what the Israelites were looking for in their worship of the calf. God tells Moses what the Israelites did. Then God says, Now don't try to stop me because I'm going to destroy the whole nation. Moses replies: Why should you be so angry at your people you took from Egypt, with great power and a strong hand? Why should Egypt say: Did he take them out to kill them in the mountains and disperse them from the face of the earth?. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel... To whom you swore and told them: I will raise your descendant as the stars of heaven, and I will give this whole country I spoke to to your descendant, and it will be their legacy forever. God agrees not to destroy the people (Exodus 32:7-14). Moses's argument has two parts: 1. If the Israelites do not reach the promised land, they will seem to demonstrate that God is weak, or that His promises are unreliable. (Until the founding of Israel in 1948, Christian theology perceived Jewish exile and suffering as proof that God rejected the covenant with Abraham.) 2. Although the Israelites have taken seriously it's an aberration and doesn't reflect who they really are. Despite their demise, they are still children of Abraham, Isaac and James; Sarah, Rivka, Rachel and Leah. These are some of the greatest spiritual giants in world history. The good news is that you can cash in on that line. Copyright © 1995 - 2020 Aish.com that is non-profit and needs your support. Please donate to: [aish.com/donate](http://aish.com/donate) or mail check to: Aish.com c/o Jerusalem Aish HaTorah Fund PO Box 1259 Lakewood, NJ 08701. Due to limited resources, ask the rabbi service is designed for Jews of small backgrounds with nowhere else to turn. People with questions in Jewish law should consult their local rabbi. Note that this is not a home service! Page 3 I take an art appreciation class and we recently studied the Michelangelo statue of Moses, which is decorated with horns. It has an anti-Semitic undertone and I wondered where this idea started? This comes from an incorrect translation of the Torah. The verse (Exodus 34:29) says that when Moses descended from the mountain with two tablets in his hands, his face shone from talking to God. The Hebrew word for radiant is keren, which is also the Hebrew word for horn. Therefore, incorrect translation. The deeper meaning of why Moses' face shone has a lot to do with the oppression of the Torah. The verse says that the Torah is light (Sayings 6:23). Just as light illuminates a dark path and allows one to stay the course, the Torah gives the person the wisdom to make the right decisions. Midrash says Adam, the first man, had skin that was completely out of the light. That said, Adam was so clean that he had no problem discerning the truth and the lie. However, after eating from a tree of knowledge of good and evil, its skin has become as opaque as the skin we have today. In other words, he has lost his purity and with it the ability to easily discern between truth and lie. The Torah has the power to restore the original purity of Adam to mankind, as seen from a verse describing the great light radiating from Moses. So, too, we all have the opportunity through Torah studies to reach great heights of spiritual and moral development. Copyright © 1995 - 2020 Aish.com that is non-profit and needs your support. Please donate to: [aish.com/donate](http://aish.com/donate) or mail check to: Aish.com c/o Jerusalem Aish HaTorah Fund PO Box 1259 Lakewood, NJ 08701. Due to limited resources, ask the rabbi service is designed for Jews of small backgrounds with nowhere else to turn. People with questions in Jewish law should consult their local rabbi. Note that this is not a home service! Recommended for Aish.com Aish.com

