

RABBISCONNECT BO HASHVUAH
CHAPTER 10-13:16
BY RABBI MARK GREENSPAN

During the final three plagues, Pharaoh's greed and his stubbornness became an insurmountable obstacle to his ability to free the people of Israel. While Pharaoh began by hardening his own heart, the ruler found that his heart was hardened for him by God. As the moment of redemption approaches for Israel, the band of slaves begins to prepare for their great deliverance from their Egyptian task masters. Here one finds the celebration of the first Passover.

1. Throughout the entire episode of the ten plagues, Moses and Pharaoh continually speak of allowing the children of Israel to leave Egypt for a limited time to worship God. No mention is made by Moses or the Egyptian ruler which specifically states that the Israelites wish to escape from Egyptian slavery forever. Is this merely a pretense, or was Pharaoh aware of Moses' real intentions? Is there anything in Moses' statements that imply his true intentions? Chapter 10, Verses 24-27.

2. Prior to the eight plague, Pharaoh is convinced by his servants to recall the leaders of the Israelite people in a final effort to save the land of Egypt. Was the Egyptian ruler serious in his willingness to negotiate at this point? How much do you think Pharaoh was willing to concede to the Israelite leaders? Compare this discussion (Chapter 10, Verses 8-11) with previous discussions between Moses and Pharaoh (Chapter 8, Verses 21-25 and Chapter 9, Verses 27-30).

3. Bible scholars have long been bothered by the incident in which the Israelites collect valuables from their Egyptian neighbors prior to leaving the land (Chapter 12, Verses 35-36). What purpose was served through this act of plunder? Why was it necessary for the Israelites to ask favors of their neighbors before leaving Egypt rather than relying grounded in a psychological reality?

4. In many ways the original Passover celebration in Egypt was quite different from the Passovers which followed it. Carefully read the description of the original Passover (Chapter 12, Verses 1-20). What are the major differences and the similarities between the two different Passover celebration? What was the purpose of the original Passover and what is the purpose of Passover as we now observe it?

5. Many commandments in the Torah are associated with the story of the Exodus from Egypt. How many commandments can you find in this Torah portion, besides the Passover celebration, which are explained through the Exodus? What theological and moral truths do we continue to learn and teach through our constant remembrance of the Exodus? What is the connection between the Exodus and the following commandments: Shabbat, the treatment of strangers, and generosity to the landless?

“THIS MONTH SHALL BE UNTO YOU THE BEGINNING OF MONTHS ” (Exodus 12:1)