

## Lesson 6

# TOWARDS FREEDOM



The hardships of the Israelites increased day by day. The slave labour broke their bodies and spirits. And the Pharaoh hardened his heart while Moses kept on interceding for his people before God. Then the Lord said to Moses: “You shall speak all that I command you, and your brother Aaron shall tell Pharaoh to let the Israelites go out of his land” (Ex 7:2). Thus God entrusted Aaron with the task of speaking on behalf of Moses who was lacking in eloquence.

Then the Lord said to Moses and Aaron: **If the Pharaoh asks you for a sign, you must ask Aaron to take your staff and throw it down before you. It will change into a snake.** Moses and Aaron went to the Pharaoh and did as the Lord had

commanded them. Aaron threw down the staff before the pharaoh and his servants. It turned into a snake, then Pharaoh called for his wise men and magicians. They too threw their staffs down and by their magic and sorcery turned them into snakes. But Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs (Ex. 7:8-12).

## Ten Plagues

The hard hearted Pharaoh refused to listen to the pleas of Moses and Aaron. He did not let the Israelites go to worship their God. Then God sent ten plagues into Egypt, one after the other. These plagues were:

1. Water turns to blood.
2. Large number of frogs plague the land.
3. Gnats plague humans and animals.
4. The houses of the Pharaoh and the Egyptians filled with swarms of flies.
5. The livestock of the Egyptians die of pestilence.
6. Festering boils afflict humans and animals.
7. Rain of hail, flash of fire and thunder.
8. Swarm of locusts.
9. Three days of darkness.
10. Death of every first born of the Egyptians.

## The Tenth Plague

The Pharaoh did not release the Israelites even after the first nine plagues shook the country. All of the plagues came as a result of what Moses did as directed by God. They affected only the Egyptians and not the Israelites. Each of the plagues would make the Pharaoh agree to let the Israelites leave but later when the plague ceased, he would harden his mind against them. So God finally decided to send the tenth punishment and said to Moses: "I will bring one more plague upon pharaoh and upon Egypt; afterwards he will let you go from here;" (Ex. 11:1).

## Passover Celebration

God prepared a special plan to liberate His people, the Israelites, from slavery. This is an event of great significance in the Old Testament. God explained to Moses and Aaron his plan to liberate Israel and punish Egypt.

The Lord told Moses and Aaron in the Land of Egypt: **This month shall be the first month of the year for you. Tell the whole congregation of Israel that on the tenth of this month they are to take a lamb for each household. This shall be without blemish and a one-year-old male. You shall keep it till the fourteenth day of this month. Then the whole congregation of Israel shall slaughter it at twilight. They shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. They shall eat the lamb that same night, roasted over the fire with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. This is how you shall eat it; your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you must eat it hurriedly. For, it is the Passover of the Lord.**

**“I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike down every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both human beings and animals; on all gods of Egypt I will execute judgments; I am the LORD. The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live: when I see the blood, I will pass over you and no plague shall destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt. This day shall be a day of remembrance for you. You shall celebrate it as a festival to the LORD. Throughout your generations you shall observe it as a perpetual ordinance”.** (Ex: 12:12-14).

Moses carried to the people of Israel all the instructions of the Lord. They went and did exactly as the Lord had commanded. They prepared the Passover meal and ate it and sprinkled the blood of the lamb on doorposts.

That midnight, the angel of the Lord killed all the firstborn of Egypt. Pharaoh and all the Egyptians woke up that night. There was a loud cry in Egypt. The death of every firstborn was the tenth punishment meted out by God.

That night itself the Pharaoh called Moses and Aaron and said: “Rise up, go away from my people, both you and the Israelites! Go, worship the LORD, as you said” (Exodus 12:31). The Egyptians begged the Israelites to leave the land as soon as possible. The Israelites asked the Egyptians for Jewellery of silver and gold and for clothes. And the Egyptians gave whatever they asked.

### Crossing the Sea

Without wasting any time the people of Israel started on foot. They took their cattle and sheep along with them. Crossing the desert they reached the sea. There they rested to cross the sea and continue later.

Once the people of Israel left the land, the Egyptians changed their mind. When they realized that they would not have slaves any more, they decided to bring the Israelites back. So the Pharaoh and his army followed the Israelites. The Israelites resting by the sea saw the army of Pharaoh approaching them. Moses prayed to God for help. God asked Moses to stretch his staff over the sea. When he did so the sea parted, giving them a dry path to cross the sea. When they walked through this path the water stood on both sides like two walls.

Pharaoh and his army followed. When the Israelites had reached the other shore, God asked Moses to stretch his hand over the sea. When Moses did so the water of the sea returned to its normal depth and the Egyptians were drowned. Thus the Israelites crossed the sea in a miraculous way with the help of the Lord.

## **The Feast of Passover**

As preparation for the liberation from Egypt the Lord had asked the Israelites to 'eat the Paschal or Passover meal' The word Passover means **passing over or transition**. On the feast of Passover the people of Israel were celebrating the memory of their transition from slavery in Egypt to freedom. They were liberated under the leadership of Moses.

We, the people of the New Testament also celebrate the Paschal feast. In the new Paschal festival we celebrate the memory of humanity being redeemed from the slavery of sin. The humans achieved this liberation from the slavery of sin through the death of Jesus on the cross.

The people of Israel were liberated from Egypt by the direct intervention of God through Moses. Likewise He saved us all from the clutches of sin by giving His own Son Jesus for the world. The God who redeemed the Israelites from the power of the Pharaoh did redeem us from the power of sin. Hence we must strive to love and obey God more and more.

### **Let us Pray**

O God who saved Israel from the power of Pharaoh save us also from the power of evil.

### **Read the word of God and narrate**

Narrate the event of the killing of all the firstborns of Egypt (Exodus 11:1-10).



## Word of God for our Guidance

The LORD is my strength and my might  
and has become my salvation  
(Exodus 15:2).

### My decision

As Moses overcame the problems of life, with trust in God, I will also trust in God in the problems of my life.

### Let us do

Put the following in the proper order

1. The people of Israel ate the paschal meal.
2. Pharaoh accepted his defeat.
3. The angel of God killed all the firstborn of Egypt.
4. The Egyptians compelled the Israelites to leave their land.
5. Pharaoh and his army pursued the Israelites.
6. Moses stretched out the staff over the sea and divided it.
7. The Israelites journeyed through the wilderness and reached the sea.
8. The Egyptians who followed the Israelites through the divided sea were drowned in the water.
9. The Israelites walked through the divided sea as if through dry land.
10. The way through the sea was refilled with water.



## **Let us find out the answer**

1. What was the sign that God worked through Aaron before Pharaoh?
2. Why did God send ten plagues over Egypt?
3. What was the direction given by God for the celebration of Paschal meal?
4. What was the tenth plague which afflicted Egyptians?
5. What is the meaning of the word Pass-over?
6. Why did the Israelites celebrate the feast of Pass-over?