

The Book of Exodus

Lesson 6

Chapters 11:1 - 12:36

At the end of the last plague, Pharaoh had intended to drive Moses from his court with a threat that if Moses ever saw his face again it would be the day he died. Moses had asked Pharaoh to let the LORD's people go to make a sacrifice many times. The Scripture does not show that his intent was to lie to Pharaoh and escape from Egypt. The LORD does not operate that way. Had Pharaoh let the people go to make the sacrifice, they would have had to return to Egypt in good faith. But with the last plague, Pharaoh will run the Israelites out of Egypt in the anger and distress of the moment. However, Moses will not ask Pharaoh to let the Israelites go ever again! Nevertheless, Moses is not through speaking to the people in Pharaoh's presence as we will see in this chapter.

Last Plague Announced to People

Exodus 11:1 Now the LORD said to Moses, "One more plague I will bring on Pharaoh and on Egypt; after that he will let you go from here. When he lets you go, he will surely drive you out from here completely. ² **"Speak now in the hearing of the people that each man ask from his neighbor and each woman from her neighbor for articles of silver and articles of gold."**

The LORD said to Moses, **"Speak now in the hearing of the people."** We do not know how often Moses had communicated with the Israelites during the occurrences of the plagues. The Israelites were immune and protected from the previous nine plagues. Surely they about their occurrences but we do not know anything about their interaction with Moses and Aaron. However, some of the Israelite leadership must have been in this last meeting with Pharaoh because Moses addressed them and the Egyptians.

The instruction to the people was **"that each man ask from his neighbor and each woman from her neighbor for articles of silver and articles of gold."** The Egyptians in Pharaoh's court heard this instruction to the leaders of the Israelite people. Previously, just the women had asked for donations from the Egyptian neighbors; here, the men are included. We must wonder why the Egyptians would give to the Israelites. Were they good friends? Probably. Were they in fear of the LORD because the Egyptian neighbors were affected by the last nine plagues? Probably. To what extent, we do not know! What we do know is that the Egyptians placed the power of Moses high above that which they had for Pharaoh or anyone else.

Favor Among the People

Exodus 11:3 And the LORD gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians. Furthermore, the man Moses *himself* was greatly esteemed in the land of Egypt, both in the sight of Pharaoh's servants and in the sight of the people.

The mere fact that the Israelites were immune from the plagues caused the Egyptians to hold the Israelites in great favor. But what does that mean? It really means that the Egyptians were afraid of the Israelites; they were in awe of the Israelite's good fortune which could be bestowed upon them only by a god. "**Moses himself was greatly esteemed.**" Moses' status was actually foretold by the LORD in a previous passage; he would be looked upon as a god in the eyes of Pharaoh and his people. All the Egyptians knew that, when Moses spoke, his words would come to pass. The word "esteemed" does not mean respect as it does today. "**Greatly esteemed**" in this case, means he was the true authority in the land; the Egyptians saw Moses as a more powerful man in Egypt than Pharaoh, and so did Pharaoh's servants.

Death About Midnight

Exodus 11:4 **And Moses said, "Thus says the LORD, 'About midnight I am going out into the midst of Egypt,⁵ and all the first-born in the land of Egypt shall die, from the first-born of the Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the first-born of the slave girl who is behind the millstones; all the first-born of the cattle as well.**

Evidently, the LORD had already communicated to Moses about the tenth plague because here we see Moses giving further instructions to the Israelites. In Pharaoh's court, Moses starts by telling everyone the plague will begin "**About midnight.**" The actual day of the plague is not indicated in this passage. However, when the plague begins, the LORD will kill every "**first-born in the land of Egypt,**" including humans and animals.

The mention of the "**first-born**" has significance in the Bible. Previously, the term has been used 23 times in Genesis and Exodus. Each time, it refers to the preeminent son, meaning the first son, the unique position that no other son can ever attain. In Pharaoh's case, his eldest son will inherit the throne one day. It also designates the chief position in the family of the son who, when he comes of age, will rule the family alongside his father to implement his father's plans. However, in this passage, as in a few others, the Hebrew word in context indicates a collective intent meaning the firstling or first child either male or female. Therefore, the firstborn son is only partially intended in this passage if he is indeed the firstborn child of a family. If a girl is the firstborn, she will be the one who dies. Fear must have gripped the hearts of the Egyptians as well as Pharaoh!

Distinction Between Egypt and Israel

Exodus 11:6 **'Moreover, there shall be a great cry in all the land of Egypt, such as there has not been *before* and such as shall never be again.⁷ ' But against any of the sons of Israel a dog shall not even bark, whether against man or beast, that you may understand how the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.'⁸ "And all these your servants will come down to me and bow themselves before me, saying, 'Go out, you and all the people who follow you,' and after that I will go out." And he went out from Pharaoh in hot anger.⁹ Then the LORD said to Moses, " Pharaoh will not listen to you, so that My wonders will be multiplied in the land of Egypt."¹⁰ **And Moses and Aaron performed all these wonders before Pharaoh; yet the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the sons of Israel go out of his land.****

“But against any of the sons of Israel a dog shall not even bark, whether against man or beast, that you may understand how the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.” In Pharaoh’s court, Moses declares that Israel will be protected from the death at midnight and that will include all the animals that belong to them. Notice that for the first time in Scripture a dog is mentioned as well as beasts. The word beasts is a reference to what we call livestock. By their very nature, livestock such as sheep, goats, cattle, etc., can be herded; however, dogs by nature cannot be herded unless they are leashed together as they are used in the Arctic for pulling sleds. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume these are domesticated dogs of some sort and not wild ones.

“And all these your servants will come down to me and bow themselves before me, saying, ‘Go out, you and all the people who follow you,’ and after that I will go out.” Moses is still in Pharaoh’s court and he is speaking to the Egyptians who are present; they all have authority under Pharaoh for some part of oversight in Egypt. Moses’ words foretell a revolt on their part after the next plague when they will bow to him instead of Pharaoh. According to Moses, they will encourage Him to leave Egypt with all that belongs to the LORD.

“And he went out from Pharaoh in hot anger.” This sentence is not clear; did Moses leave in “hot anger” or was it Pharaoh who was hot with anger? Speaking of Moses, Hebrews 11:27 says, “By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing Him who is unseen.” From this connection it seems that Pharaoh was the one hot with anger and not Moses.

Calendar Change

Exodus 12:1 Now the LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt,² “This month shall be the beginning of months for you; it is to be the first month of the year to you.

Moses had left the court of Pharaoh and the LORD had approached him with this change in the calendar dating for the nation of Israel. At that time, Israel and Egypt’s calendars were in the sixth month of the year. Because they were both on lunar calendars, the months were not synchronized with the seasons like our solar calendar today. Prior to going to Egypt, the Israelites called their months by the numerical numbers of one through twelve. While in Egypt for 430 years, the Israelites had begun to use the Egyptian names for each month. The sixth month was called Abib, but under the direction of the LORD it will become the first month. Some confusion exists with new Bible study students who see most references to the first month of the year named Nissan. About 1,000 years after the exodus, Israel will change the name of the first month of their year while they are in exile to the Babylonian name for the month. Therefore, in the story it is the beginning of the month of Abib/Nissan and we will refer to the first month that way for clarity throughout the commentary.

10th of the Month – Select Sacrifice

Exodus 12:3 “Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying, ‘On the tenth of this month they are each one to take a lamb for themselves, according to their fathers’ households, a lamb for each household.⁴ ‘Now if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his neighbor nearest to his house are to take one according to the

number of persons *in them*; according to what each man should eat, you are to divide the lamb. ⁵ **'Your lamb shall be an unblemished male a year old; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats.**

"On the tenth of this month they are each one to take a lamb for themselves." Obviously, the death plague did not occur the night Moses left Pharaoh's court; according to this record, Moses did not indicate to the Egyptians in Pharaoh's court which midnight the deaths would occur on and it must have brought great anxiety to them. In this passage we see the LORD instruct the people to select a lamb on the tenth day of the month. Therefore, the LORD's instruction came to Moses some time between the first and ninth of Abib/Nissan. The lamb was to be of an appropriate size to feed the family with nothing left over after the meal. If a family was small in number, then two or more families could join together to eat the meal in which one lamb would provide for their needs.

"Your lamb" is a mistranslation. It should read in English *your kid*. In English, a lamb comes from the sheep family not the goat. In context, the LORD allows the meat of the meal to be either sheep or goat. In English, the young animals, less than one year old, are called kids in both the sheep and goat families. Later, in the theology of the Bible, the difference between the sheep and the goats will be defined metaphorically as opposites in God's will, but at this time, in this context, the sheep and goats have no good or evil connotations.

14th of the Month – Kill and Roast Sacrifice

Exodus 12:6 **'And you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month, then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel is to kill it at twilight.**

"And you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month" indicates that the kid was to be kept safe from the 10th to the 14th day of Abib/Nissan. No doubt, with the animal cut from the herd and kept near the home, even in just four days, the kid would have acquired the natural affection of the family, especially if children were in the home. Nevertheless, the kid was to be killed **"at twilight."**

"Twilight" would be better translated *evening*; however, to be accurate, the word *afternoon* would be a better translation. Evening in Israelite terms began just after high noon as the sun began to descend. In Israel at that time the 24 hour period was broken into three sections: night, day, evening. Night began at 6:00pm and lasted until 6:00am when day began. Day lasted until high noon when the start of evening ensued. In comparison, their night is our night, their day is our morning and their evening is our afternoon. In this passage, most commentators interpret it to indicate that the kid was to be killed just before sunset on the 14th of Abib/Nissan.

We do not know the exact day of the week that the 10th of Abib/Nissan fell on; however, great pains were taken by the High Priest Hillel II in 358 AD to alter the Jewish calendar so it would align perfectly with the time of the original Passover mentioned in this story. Therefore, according to his calculations, the 10th of Abib/Nissan occurred on the first day of the week which we call Sunday; however, on the Jewish calendar, the 10th actually began at 6:00pm on what we would have called Saturday the 9th. Here is an example of the week.

SUMMARY CALENDAR: The Week of the Passover in Egypt

	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Night Begins at 6:00pm						PASSOVER AT MIDNIGHT MEAL EATEN Night of the 15 th	Night spent in Succoth Night of the 16 th
6:00 PM							
Evening Begins at high noon 12:00pm		Evening of the 10 th	Evening of the 11 th	Evening of the 12 th	Evening of the 13 th	Evening of the 14 th	Israel on their journey Evening of the 15 th
High Noon							
Day Begins at 6:00am		Kid Selected Morning of the 10 th	Morning of the 11 th	Morning of the 12 th	Morning of the 13 th	Morning of the 14 th	Meeting in Rameses and the Departure from Egypt Morning of the 15 th
6:00 AM							

Blood on Doorposts and Lintels

Exodus 12:7 ' Moreover, they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses in which they eat it.

"Take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel." The instruction was to use the blood to mark the doors on the houses where the Israelites lived. Surely, the LORD did not need this sign to indicate which homes belonged to the Israelites as opposed to those that belonged to the Egyptians. The LORD had already protected them from the other nine plagues; why would He need a sign now? The blood on the door had to be a sign for something else. Perhaps it was to be an outward sign of their inward belief. In Egypt, not one house would be free from death except those homes where blood had already been shed for their protection.

Eat Meal

Exodus 12:8 'And they shall eat the flesh that *same* night, roasted with fire, and they shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. **9** 'Do not eat any of it raw or boiled at all with water, but rather roasted with fire, *both* its head and its legs along with its entrails. **10** ' And you shall not leave any of it over until morning, but whatever is left of it until morning, you shall burn with fire.

Could Egyptians have followed the LORD's instructions and avoided the death that night? The answer is yes; however the instruction beginning in verse 8 would have placed extreme cultural pressure on the Egyptians. Egyptians ate most of their meat raw in honor of their god Osiris. The Egyptian's that lived further south in Egypt, whom we call Ethiopians today, still eat their meat raw. Furthermore, the sheep and the goats were honored by the Egyptians as gods. The Egyptians would have had to go against their belief system to participate.

For Israel, the custom of the day was to boil their meat; for this event they would have to change their normal way of meat preparation. The small kid could be roasted quickly on the fire. Surely it was skinned, but all the parts of the animal were to be roasted. We are not accustomed to eating all the parts of an animal; however, in that day, nothing was wasted or discarded when an animal was slain; even the hide and the hooves were used for something. When the LORD says, **“but whatever is left of it until morning, you shall burn with fire,”** also went against the normal customs of the Israelites. The LORD was asking everyone who participated in the Passover Meal to trust Him and change their customs and burn the leftovers even though they were still useful!

It was normal to eat bread that had been allowed to rise. In this case, the specific instruction was to eat bread with no leaven added. Here a seed of theology was being planted by the LORD for future reference. In the context of the rest of the Bible, leaven is interpreted as sin. The Israelites have no concept of that in this meal; it will come with further revelation from the LORD after they leave Egypt. The bitter herbs were also a symbol of theology planted here for future use. It will be a reminder of the severe suffering.

Dress for Meal

Exodus 12:11 ‘Now you shall eat it in this manner: *with your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste—it is the LORD’S Passover.*

The loins were girded for work, the sandals were worn only outside the house, the staff was left at the door. Each instruction went against the normal customs of the Israelites. In the home, the part of clothing used to gird the loins was never worn, the shoes were left at the door and the staff in close quarters of the small homes was dangerous. What a change of mind was needed for the Israelites that night.

Announcement of Passover

Exodus 12:12 ‘For I will go through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike down all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments-- I am the LORD.¹³ 'And the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live; and when I see the blood I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.

Even though all of the Israelites were blood kin, even though the LORD had heard their cry for help, even though they had been in bondage for 430 years, even though they were heirs to the promised covenant with Abraham, the time had come for them to tell the nation in which they lived that they belonged to the One true and living God. It was not a time to silently believe in Him; it was a time of public declaration by coating the doorposts and lintels with blood. In this passage the LORD was saying to the people, “believe in Me, follow My instructions!”

A Memorial Day

Exodus 12:14 ‘Now this day will be a memorial to you, and you shall celebrate it as a feast to the LORD; throughout your generations you are to celebrate it as a permanent ordinance.

The day of the Passover will be one of terrible heartbreak for every Egyptian family, but for the Israelites, it will be a day of liberation. In the future, the Israelites are to celebrate the memory of this day with a feast, not mourning as some might try to imply. “**It as a permanent ordinance**” means that the Israelites are never to forget to celebrate the anniversary of that event.

Seven Day Remembrance

Exodus 12:15 ‘Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, but on the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses; for whoever eats anything leavened from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel. **16** ‘And on the first day you shall have a holy assembly, and *another* holy assembly on the seventh day; no work at all shall be done on them, except what must be eaten by every person, that alone may be prepared by you.

For some reason, the LORD allows Moses to tell the people about the seven days of remembrance that will be required in the future to celebrate the event of the Passover. In this first year, the Passover will occur and on the following morning, the nation of Israel will leave Egypt armed with its unleavened bread dough and travel for several days before being far enough away from Egypt to stop and allow the bread to rise. For that reason, the LORD was instructing Israel to eat the unleavened bread for seven days beginning on the first anniversary of the departure from Egypt. When the anniversary celebration begins, the house is to be cleaned and a holy worship meeting is to be observed along with the Feast of Unleavened Bread. At the end of the seven days, another holy meeting is to be observed.

Feast of Unleavened Bread

Exodus 12:17 ‘You shall also observe the *Feast of Unleavened Bread*, for on this very day I brought your hosts out of the land of Egypt; therefore you shall observe this day throughout your generations as a permanent ordinance.

Here, the LORD instructs that the Feast of Unleavened Bread is to occur on the day the LORD led the Israelites out of Egypt. That day was Abib/Nissan 15th, 2711 years after the creation of Adam or 1464 BC on the Gregorian calendar.

Feast Instructions

Exodus 12:18 ‘In the first *month*, on the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread, until the twenty-first day of the month at evening.¹⁹ ‘Seven days there shall be no leaven found in your houses; for whoever eats what is leavened, that person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether *he is* an alien or a native of the land.²⁰ ‘You shall not eat anything leavened; in all your dwellings you shall eat unleavened bread.’”

Do not be misled by this wording, “**In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at evening.**” The evening of the day in that culture was what we call afternoon. The evening was the last part of each night and day in Israelite life, night was first and day is second. At that time, the day was divided into two parts but the night was still only one part. When the family of Jacob leaves Egypt as a nation, they will quickly learn that their cities and villages will need

watchmen throughout the nights and days. At that time they will divide into multiple watches as indicated in the story of the arrest, trial and crucifixion of the LORD; however, those divisions will not be organized for many years after the Passover story. Therefore, at the end of the day on the 14th, at 6:00pm, the new night of the 15th begins.

“For whoever eats what is leavened, that person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether *he is an alien or a native of the land*” is difficult to understand. Who will “cut off” the person from the congregation, the LORD or the leaders of the people? What does “cut off” mean? It is translated other places in the Scripture in context so many different ways that no clear definition comes forth.

Ways Hebrew word for “cut off” is translated in Scripture

beams (3), cease (1), chewed (1), completely cut off (1), covenanted (1), cut (10), cut her off (1), cut him off (5), cut it down (1), cut it off (1), cut them down (1), cut you down (1), cut you off (2), cut down (23), cut off (129), cuts (1), cuts off (4), cutter (1), destroy (1), destroyed (3), fail (1), kill (1), lack (8), made (52), make (31), makes (2), making (2), making an in writing (1), perish (1)

The best definition for “cut off” is that the person is ejected from the community as will be the case for others in situations such as wives who believe in foreign gods and people with leprosy.

Instruction to Elders

Exodus 12:21 **Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel, and said to them, " Go and take for yourselves lambs according to your families, and slay the Passover lamb.**
22 **" And you shall take a bunch of hyssop and dip it in the blood which is in the basin, and apply some of the blood that is in the basin to the lintel and the two doorposts; and none of you shall go outside the door of his house until morning.**
23 **" For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the LORD will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to come in to your houses to smite you.** 24 **" And you shall observe this event as an ordinance for you and your children forever.** 25 **" And it will come about when you enter the land which the LORD will give you, as He has promised, that you shall observe this rite.** 26 **" And it will come about when your children will say to you, ' What does this rite mean to you?'** 27 **that you shall say, 'It is a Passover sacrifice to the LORD who passed over the houses of the sons of Israel in Egypt when He smote the Egyptians, but spared our homes.'** 28 **" And the people bowed low and worshiped.**

For the most part, the instruction to the elders is the same as that which has come before in this chapter. One added note is that **“none of you shall go outside the door of his house until morning.”** Morning will not arrive until 6:00am, a full 12 hours after the doors to the houses are shut. It will be evident in this chapter that Moses and Aaron will not adhere to this command. Pharaoh will call for them in the middle of the night and they will go to see him. Additionally, neither Aaron nor Moses was the firstborn releasing them from the curse that night; however, for the rest of Israel, no one was to leave the house until morning.

“It is a Passover sacrifice to the LORD who passed over the houses” is to be the reply to the child throughout the following centuries to answer the questions of the children. The LORD has not missed one point in communicating with His people.

Preparation for Passover in Egypt

Exodus 12:28 Then the sons of Israel went and did so; just as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did. 29 Now it came about at midnight that the LORD struck all the first-born in the land of Egypt, from the first-born of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the first-born of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the first-born of cattle.

At midnight on the 15th of Abib/Nissan, the LORD swept through Egypt and killed the firstborn child of every household that did not have the blood on the doorposts and lintels. Even Pharaoh’s home was not exempt.

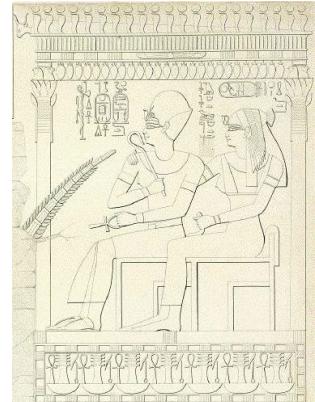
Pharaoh did not die that night because he was not the firstborn of his family. The chart provided in lesson 2 shows that his sister, Neferure, was the oldest sibling in Pharaoh’s family. Pharaoh’s name was Thutmose III and he had married his older sister but she had died before she turned 11, leaving the pharaoh as a widower. He then married Hatshepsut-Merytre as his principle queen and the mother of his children. She was the daughter of Divine Adoretrix Huy; however she was not the firstborn; therefore, she did not die on the night of the Passover.

Amenenhat was Pharaoh’s firstborn. In Thutmose III’s 24th year as pharaoh, two years after the death of Hatshepsut (his stepmother, not his wife), Amenemhat’s name was inscribed in the Karnak Temple stating that he was to be the *Overseer of the Cattle*. Amenemhat’s name was also depicted in the Theban tomb of his tutor, Min, the Mayor of Thinis. Thinis was the supposed original capital city of the first pharaoh. It holds the status of being the place of the dead royals although its geological location has never been found. Min was buried in Thebes and that is where Amenemhat’s name was depicted in hieroglyphs. The manner and time of Amenemhat’s death has not been recorded anywhere in available documents save the record that will be seen in this exodus story. He had to have died during the Passover.

After the death of Thutmose III, his son born to Hatshepsut-Merytre will take the throne. His name is Amenhotep II and there are several carvings of him with his mother available for viewing today.



Picture 3: Stone carving of Hatshepsut-Merytre, the second principal wife of Thutmose III and mother of his official children



Picture 4: Amenhotep II with his mother, Hatshepsut-Merytre behind him

Pharaoh's Discovery

Exodus 12:30 **And Pharaoh arose in the night, he and all his servants and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was no home where there was not someone dead.**

As midnight came, so did the grief in Egypt. Pharaoh had no control over the events of that night. That opportunity had passed several days before. With the LORD, a deadline for everything will come to pass.

Pharaoh's Call for Moses

Exodus 12:31 **Then he called for Moses and Aaron at night and said, "Rise up, get out from among my people, both you and the sons of Israel; and go, worship the LORD, as you have said.** ³² **"Take both your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and go, and bless me also."** ³³ **And the Egyptians urged the people, to send them out of the land in haste, for they said, "We shall all be dead."**

"Then he called for Moses and Aaron at night." Through all the plagues Pharaoh had to deal with, human death occurred only with those left unsheltered during the eighth plague of hail. That plague paled in comparison to the Passover. Every home was affected with death, including Pharaoh's. His call to Moses and Aaron was in desperation. He was beaten down. It was time for Israel to **"get out from among"** his people. Pharaoh was not the only one to want the Israelites out of the land; even the Egyptians wanted them out in fear that if they did not leave, they **"shall all be dead."**

Plunder of Egypt

Exodus 12:34 **So the people took their dough before it was leavened, with their kneading bowls bound up in the clothes on their shoulders.** ³⁵ **Now the sons of Israel had done according to the word of Moses, for they had requested from the Egyptians articles of silver and articles of gold, and clothing;** ³⁶ **and the LORD had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have their request. Thus they plundered the Egyptians.**

"So the people took their dough before it was leavened" and carried it raw bound up in cloth out of Egypt on their shoulders. The unleavened bread would feed them for several days until they could settle in a place to make more.

Bread was not all that they took from Egypt; as the Scripture says, **"Thus they plundered the Egyptians."** The Egyptians could not have known that they were supplying the needs of the Israelites for everything tangible except food and water for 40 years.