

Passover Apocrypha

A retelling of Exodus 1-12

Cast

Readers 1-15

Reader 1: I had a dream last night that we were back in Egypt. It all seemed so real. The time has gone so quickly, it is hard to believe that it was really forty years ago!

Reader 2: Do you know the thing I remember most about Egypt? And no, it's not the leeks and cucumbers. I was just a little guy then, being carried on my Dad's shoulders and I remember seeing for the first time the huge flame of fire that seemed to be leading the immense caravan of people that was moving in front of me as far as my eyes could see. I didn't know whether to be excited or afraid, but I felt safe and secure with my Dad holding me. I wonder how God will lead us in the future?

Reader 3: I was older and had to walk out of Egypt on my own two feet. We were poor and didn't have a donkey or cart so we could only take what we could carry. Even so I was overjoyed to be leaving Egypt, as I was already old enough to be a slave hauling water for the other slaves who were making bricks. Now that I think about it, my most vivid memory was of being beaten for bringing water from the Nile, which to my horror turned to blood as I was offering a drink to the taskmaster. He cursed me and whipped me but had to eat, or perhaps "drink" his words as for seven whole days there was no clean water anywhere near the Nile.

Reader 4: I haven't thought about this for a long time, but I was one of those impish little kids who would run from home as soon as the chores were done and I was able to sneak away unnoticed. My mates and I would gather at the river and have mock battles with the reeds and catch frogs. We had heard our parents speaking of Moses and his great power and his battles with the magicians and we would pretend to throw down our reeds so they would turn into snakes. How amazed we were this one morning when we threw down our reeds and frogs, millions of them, began pouring from the river. In our young minds it was just too curious to be coincidence and we ran home screaming incoherently about the terrible thing we had done.

Reader 5: I was too young to remember anything about that time but Grandpa was a good friend of Aaron's. Every year at Passover he would tell us about the time that Aaron struck the earth with his staff and the dust turned into nasty annoying gnats that buzzed in your ears, got stuck in your hair and flew up your nose. They didn't really hurt anything but they were so infuriating they just about drove everything, man and animal, mad with frustration. Of course he always recounted that the funniest part was when the magicians confessed that they couldn't add to Pharaoh's misery by creating more gnats for him and therefore this must be the hand of God. But would Pharaoh listen to his own magicians this time? Not on your life! He was just that stubborn.

Reader 6: I remember it all! I was already employed making mud bricks to create the Pharaoh's ambitious building projects. When Moses returned with the promise to free us from Egypt and everyone was ecstatic. But then the hardships began to come: first having to go and cut our own straw, then the water being undrinkable, and finally the frogs and the gnats making real work almost impossible. The taskmasters were furious that we were getting behind schedule and they knew Pharaoh would surely make them pay for it! I must admit I was beginning to wonder like many of my friends whether Moses was a curse or a blessing. Pharaoh was as stubborn as ever and these plagues were making a bad situation much worse. The brick making work had ground to a halt and I was sent home to Goshen. But then there was this awesome miracle.

Reader 7: No Flies! Yes, what a relief that was! It was as if God put a bubble of protection over us. You can imagine what that did for our flagging spirits, to know that though biting flies were tormenting the Egyptians, there was a place of sanctuary in Goshen. God hadn't forgotten us. He would deliver us if we would only be patient. But the greater miracle was when He protected all our livestock from that awful disease. So many of the Egyptian cattle dropped dead in their tracks, but we were spared. I had a pet sheep that I was very fond of and I felt very thankful to God that she was spared.

Reader 8: Have you ever had a boil? Well I have, right here on my neck, and I can tell you they are painful. My mother was a servant in the Pharaoh's house when Moses threw the ash from the brick kilns into the air and the plague of boils began. (At least that's what she told me as I was just a toddler.) Being an Israelite she was one of the few who did not suffer with boils and could still work and serve her mistress. One boil is painful enough, I can't imagine being covered with them from head to toe, as the Egyptians were. Mom said that it was no wonder the magicians didn't respond to Moses when he came to visit Pharaoh. It was very painful to sit but excruciating to try and move! Her mistress just wept continually she was so miserable.

Reader 9: I had been working in Pharaoh's stables mucking out the barns and grooming the horses. Most Israelites had returned to Goshen but I worked for a very kind old stable master, Haj, who loved his horses and all the lads who worked for him. So I had stayed and did not regret my decision. Haj cursed Pharaoh, at least under his breath, for his pride and stubbornness. He even confided to me that he believed Pharaoh would be the ruin of Egypt. When I learned that Moses prophesied a great hailstorm and warned the people to take cover, I ran immediately to tell Haj hoping I wouldn't be too late. The news galvanized him into action. He called on all his workers to hurry and herd the animals out of the pasture into the stables. He would rather endure the Pharaoh's wrath than God's. We could see huge black thunderheads rolling in from the west as the last of the frightened mares was put safely in her stall. The sound of the hail was incredible and the destruction was beyond imagination, but we were safe.

Reader 10: You all know that my Grampa was an Egyptian and one of Pharaoh's advisers. As he used to tell the story he'd been watching the whole war of words between Moses and Pharaoh. It quickly figured out where it would all lead, but it did take him some time to get up the courage to confront Pharaoh. He had wisely brought in his servants and animals during the hail and had not suffered any losses, so when Moses came to warn of a plague of locust it was the last straw. Grampa and the other advisers finally pleaded with Pharaoh to let us Israelites go, otherwise he knew Pharaoh's pigheadedness would destroy the nation completely. When Pharaoh did not listen and all Grampa's beautiful gardens were totally destroyed Grampa began to plan for his escape with the Israelites. Of course, a certain lovely Danite servant might have had something to do with his decision too!

Reader 11: Do you think it's black out there tonight with no moon and dark clouds blocking out the stars? If so, you can't imagine what the three days of darkness in Egypt were like. Of course, if you were in Goshen light was no problem, but I was stuck in Egypt as my parents had both died and an Egyptian potter had bought me to help him in his business. So there I was, not more than ten years old and stuck in the warehouse surrounded by fragile pots and dishes. For three days, though it seemed like an eternity to me, I couldn't see a thing and I was afraid to move for fear that I would break something precious. It was so dark that I couldn't see my hand if I held it in front of my face. It was darkness so deep and gloomy you could feel it. I don't think I've ever been so afraid since, not even in the heat of battle, as I was at that time. But it did give me time to think and plan my escape so that in the turmoil and confusion after the darkness I was able to slip away undetected and find my way back to my cousin's home in Goshen.

Reader 12: You weren't the only one who was blessed to go with God's people out of Egypt. I have no recollection about that time as I was very young, but my stepmother told me that when she heard the wailing all over Egypt the night of the Passover, she feared for the worst. She worked in the household of a wealthy merchant and his two sons, as maid and cook. She had tried to warn them about the death angel and had been so bold as to tell him about Moses instructions about putting lamb's blood on the doorpost. But he was so used to buying whatever he wanted, he gave little thought to God or the needs of others. Even when his wife died due to the boils and a difficult childbirth, he remained insensitive to God and callously said her death was the will of the heathen gods. When Moses gave the order to depart Mom could not bring herself to leave without first checking on her former employer. As she suspected, she found the merchant and his first-born son dead in their beds and the nurse-maid rocking back and forth and wailing with me in her arms. Step-dad was not surprised when Mom returned with me in her arms and the nurse-maid at her side. Mom said it was what a merciful God would expect of her.

Reader 13: (2 Messengers enter) What are you all sitting around gossiping about?

Reader 1: Reminiscing, not gossiping! Do you have a Passover tale to tell?

Reader 13: Well yes, but first let me tell you the news. The spies have just returned and they have good news. It seems all the people of Jericho are terrified. It's a wonder they weren't caught though. The story is that a harlot in the city grabbed them and pulled them into her establishment just ahead of the king's patrols who were on the lookout for two strangers who had been noticed slipping in.

Reader 1: How did she know the patrol was coming?

Reader 13: I don't know, but if she is like some of the women in this camp she's part of a well-established grapevine for the latest news.

Reader 1: Well what happened next, don't keep us in suspense.

Reader 13: Well it seems she, Rahab's her name, hid them on the roof under mats of flax then when the King's guards questioned her she said they had left on their way to the Jordan fords just before the city gates closed. Later she told the spies that she knew all about the Israelites and said she believed God was about to deliver the city to us. She made the spies promise to protect her and her family then she lowered them outside the city wall and left the red rope as a sign that her household was to be protected when we invade.

Reader 1: That's amazing, reminds me of painting the red blood on the doorpost as a sign that the death angel should pass by our house on that Passover forty years ago. God kept his promise to us then, I'm sure he'll do the same for Rahab and her family.

Reader 13: Where would we all be now if God had not shown us mercy and delivered us from the death angel, from slavery, and then from Pharaoh's armies?

Reader 14: Now you asked about our Passover story. Well, we were both young but not too young to know that amazing things were happening. We had spent the day gathering gifts from our Egyptian neighbours who were anxious to see us leave. I think they hoped to appease God in the hopes that the terrible plagues would end. We helped pack all our household goods into the cart, including the kneading troughs. That night we ate our roast lamb, and unleavened bread and herbs with our sandals on and our staffs in our hands as we awaited the final word from Moses. When we left it was with great joy. Slowly the darkness faded away and a glorious sunrise began a new day, our first as free men. As we marched together in this great army we sang praises to God and excitedly talked of a new life in the land that God had promised. Little could we have known that so many years and so many trials were yet ahead of us before we could realize that dream. But here we are with our dream's end but days or weeks away.

Reader 15: What I'm still wondering is how we are going to get across the Jordan? I was down at the river today and the water has overflowed the riverbanks and is covering the flood plain with at least 3 feet of water. Even the fords are waist deep in muddy runoff. Do you think God will perform another miracle like he did when we crossed the Red Sea. That's something I'll never forget. I was riding the mule with my little sister as we rode between narrow walls of water so high we could barely see the sky. Every now and then a fish would dart out a plunge to the sandy ocean bottom. Mom gathered quite a few. At one point my habit of collecting rocks got the best of me so I slid off the mule, grabbed a shiny pebble from the seafloor, and sprang back up before Dad could catch and scold me. Here it is on this chain. I wear it to remind me of God's great faithfulness and his mighty miracles. So I wonder what He will do now.

Reader 1: I wonder too. But, He has always kept his promises and He will continue to do great things for us. Well, it's getting late and I'm exhausted. But before I go, I can't help but wonder what this Passover will hold for us all. Well, goodnight, and sweet dreams.

Readers (chorus): Goodnight, Caleb.